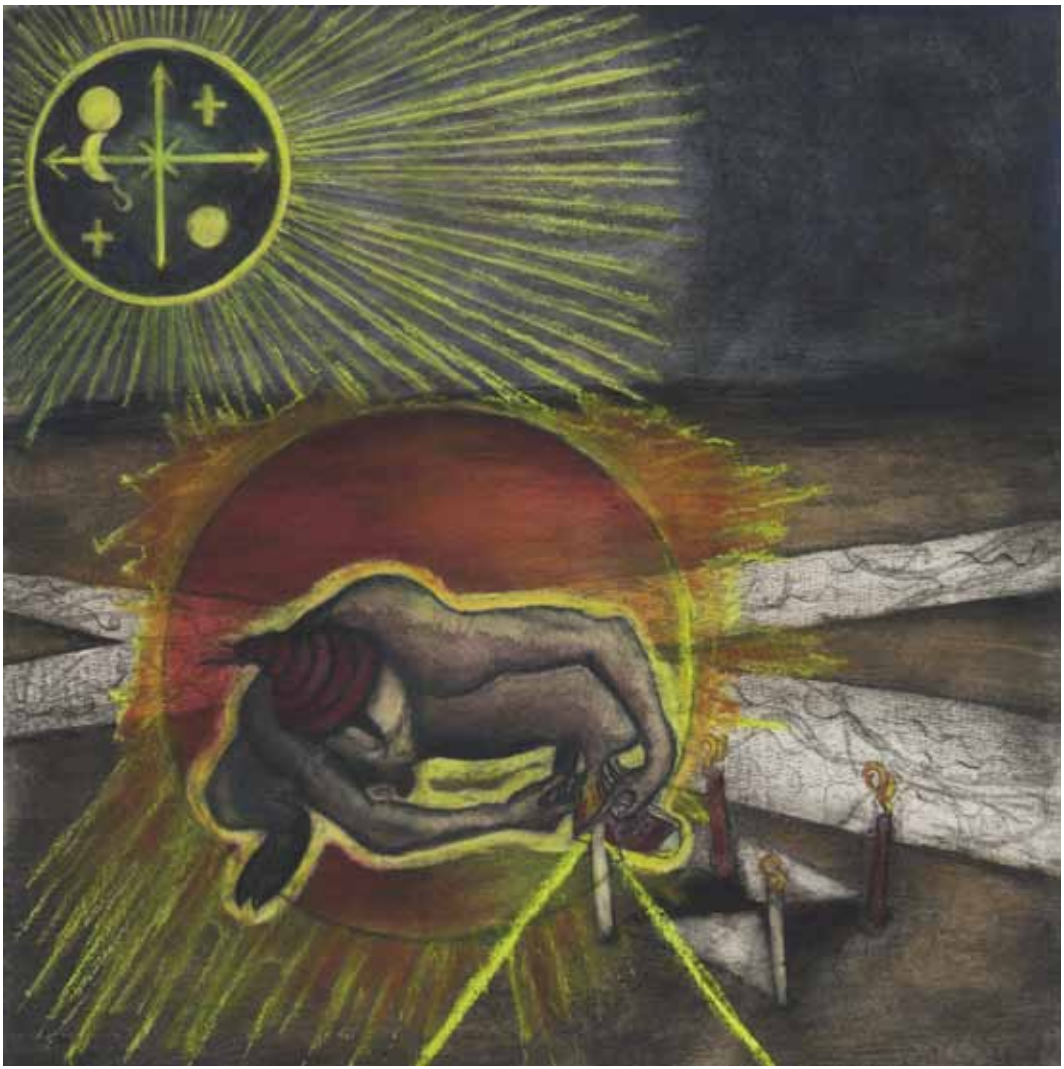

AT THE CROSSROADS

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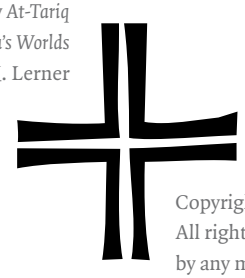

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STANDING STILL

There are particular places of power, and particular moments of appointed magical potency which we recognise. One conjunction beckons us all, the crossroads, and one moment, the stroke of midnight.

As magicians it is impossible for us to avoid converging at that point where the roads meet and then surge once more into the garden of forking paths. Whether our lines are drawn in flour, salt, gunpowder, brick dust or spider silk they all draw us to the point. It is a nexus, an appointment, a confrontation with the Devil himself that cannot be bucked. This is a labyrinth of four directions. A trap of our own making.

Hold your nerve, your concentration, your momentum. You know that the time and place are waiting for your hurried footfall. The eternal midnight of hour and minute and second hand eclipsed, stands still. Tell no-one that you are making the journey. You travel here alone.

It is not enough to simply bring your body and soul to this place and expect deliverance, there is work to be done. We must pour out our libations in the dust. This is the art of magic which seems haphazard to the untrained eye that darts after chicken feathers, unbound cats and shadows loosed from their moorings. It requires our mercury slithered into the moon silver rivulets to draw the powers up from the earth. We must entreat the Devil to show himself. We knock, we tap we canter the heart drum beat with heels. A hush; the ground answers us back.

What language is this that we all speak beneath the skin? Beneath bare foot, beneath black robe, beneath mask? It is the language of the Devil. At this place there is no distinction made. The tokens and words and dance steps and display all simply lead to the moment that the ground answers us back.

So, we draw out our crossroads and through the performance of rite, the spirits come, though we all approach on different ways. It is a net sewn with pearls, a constellation of point chaud and passing places that converges and diverges to an underlying rhythm rising from deep beneath. The crossroads is a shared, yet disparate place, a palimpsest of spectres. It cannot be owned by man or cult or state. It is the hazard that artists seek that diviners read that magicians manipulate and are manipulated by. It is a mysterious pole which simultaneously exists and cannot. We cross and recross and counter-cross this sacred space.

However uprooted and lost we seem, the crossroads draws us back home. However splintered and conflicted and bereft, it is in the earth of the crossroads that our treasure is buried and warded. Here we have disposed of our criminals, our culture's ritual debris of whores and conspirators and murderers. In this convergence is our abandoned centre, an omphallos choked with the unneeded and refugee, scavenged by black dogs. The masks hang empty. Yet it is still sacred: to us as outcasts from the self-same culture. We withstand the passage of time, the degradation, the despair.

So let us regard this particular crossroads at which we stand, as all are differently aspected – it is only the truly lost who cannot appreciate this. Those who have

Peter Grey

sought out the physical crossroads in their vicinity know what this means. They are a vital part of the genus loci that must form our magical landscape if we are to be engaged in real Work which is grounded forever in the world of dirt. But the crossroads I am speaking of here is a global one, a grand one, born out of an imperial colonial architecture where we have been traded into an alien new world of dispossessed slavery. This is as brutal as the first diaspora and again the victims are disproportionately in what is politely called the developing world. The commodities are not simply coffee, sugar or cotton, but the very life blood of the earth. The corporate heirs of the slavers have an agenda to take our identities and fracture us into competing isolated drones that they may plunder unopposed. We no longer remember who we were, but are wandering in a waste where signs point everywhere but lead to no destination.

We are at a moment of history when the number of connections is multiplying exponentially. Not simply roads, but nodes. Nowhere is this seen more so than in the archonic digital world. It is such a systemic overload that meanings are becoming entirely lost. Culture is rendered empty in a potlatch of bland exchange. The esoteric too is portioned up into indiscreet snapshots to be traded for kudos like so much anime porn. This is not a conjunction but rather the displaced devouring themselves and disempowering their spirits and symbols in the process. Our signalling is loss. This loss is celebrated as progress by those who wish us to simply all consume the same mass-produced platitudes. As resources crash, the process accelerates. These are the rubbish heaps that choke our thoughts and devour our precious time. It needs more than a William Morris movement of soft furnishing socialism to oppose this kind of production in which we find ourselves complicit. As the digital is chained to the physical, our slavery becomes our manifest destiny. When we cannot tell the difference between advertising hoardings and the real texture of human skin, between cgi and dreaming true we have fallen between worlds. The lie has become the truth ghosted over our retinas.

Magic in such a world is not a superstitious attempt to deal with a hydra, but the only sane reaction to the phenomena. We are used to dealing with worlds composed of such shifting possibilities and in it retaining both our single pointed consciousness and our peripheral vision. We are used to being excluded. From such an imposed architecture, a road map of exploitation, we can still dig down to the black soil of the crossroads buried beneath. We can draw strength from the example of the Haitian revolution and the Petro Loa. Our traditions will sustain us and our people. We can overwrite Empire with our imagination and grind it to powder for our gris gris bags. We can keep singing the songs, and exchanging them with those we meet on the path. Our deities put on the Red Dress, pare back to skull face, reveal the horns. They call us to the crossroads without our digital trinkets. They congregate us at the point of attention. They destroy the carefully fostered illusion.

But magic in the West is an antikythera mechanism corroded into a dull lump. It has been apportioned to the four (or worse, eight) directions. So do we engage in more cultural imperialism? Hijack living traditions and destroy them too? This is the bind of multiculturalism when it is used as a tool to rend identity and pap it into a fast-food gunk where every bite contains a thousand cows and none of them are individuals. Westerners are characterised as faddish new-agers,

and when our magic is not based in our culture or community then the criticism stands. It is a sign of our complete degeneration. We cast about in all directions unaware of the strength we could draw from the ground supporting our feet.

We need to get back to the root. That begins with our journey to the crossroads which already smoke with offerings. Others have maintained their practice, and they are right to view us with suspicion. Do we simply want more serpent and skull icons to trick out our hipster kit? Do we characterise the spirits of the African traditional religions as unremittingly primal and dark in the exact language of the Christian Imperialists? Or perhaps they are sexually potent cannibals? Are we roughing it with the noble savages of Leni Riefenstahl's lens to get a primitivist edge to our ritual pantomime? Do we think we are already masters of their arts whilst conveniently standing divorced from their cultures? However well intentioned, we are not always going to get it right.

Serious magicians act differently, we can carefully add to our cauldron and savour each new spice. As Jake Stratton-Kent repeatedly stresses, we are not a magical revival yet, we are trying to become a living tradition. For this we must make a careful study of what ingredients are missing from the pot and in understanding where they have come from, treat them with respect. Such a cauldron as life giving grail has been the long term quest of Scarlet Imprint, and in publishing writers such as those in this collection we intend to attain it, not to jealously hold for ourselves, but for the entire magical tradition to sup from.

Maya Deren remains a treasured example as she did not go to Haiti empty handed, but brought with her artistry and dance and open heart. She is still spoken of warmly there. It is entirely possible for us to learn from other traditions and even choose to undergo full initiation, as many of the writers collected here have done. Of particular note in this respect is Dr. Frisvold, who is not only an initiate of Palo Mayombe and Quimbanda but is a tradition holder in Ifa. It is a matter of culture, not skin colour. Neither are we suggesting that initiation into the diaspora religions is necessary for all, though some will be deeply called.

But wait, have we not been here before? The veve bear suspicious resemblance to the characters of the grimoire magic of Europe, to masonry and ritual magic. The spells of the many books of magical secrets are those of hoodoo. The diaspora religions have engaged in the same expedient process of borrowing, building and adapting to their changed circumstances. There is much that we can find in them which is familiar. The methods that these living traditions have applied are those which we must also engage in. They have both taken and crucially added to what they found, they have been attentive to the voices of the spirits, ancestors and gods.

This book bears no small debt to the rediscovery of the grimoires by this very generation of magicians in the West. Paradoxically this has been one of the results of the digital age and the availability of the information that was once reserved in the academy stacks or simply melted away with the pamphlets of the Bibliothèque Bleue. We should all be familiar with the *Black Dragon*, *Enchiridion*, *Verum* and the Keys. Suddenly, shockingly we are shown to have a tradition that is more than the folklore scraps of psalms and psalters that mean next to nothing in our post-christian age. We have a history that stretches not only to the grimoires, but beyond them to the Greeks, goes and shamanic past. Our

ghosts are returning and with urgent messages for us.

Aaron Leitch must be commended as first to press with his *Secrets of the Magical Grimoires*, where he decodes these derided texts with the aid of his experience of the diaspora religions and the ideas of shamanism. But as he acknowledges in his essay here, there have been others. It seems that we are all learning to read the green language again. We have as a generation begun to draw the invisible lines, and this has required the knowledge of those who never stopped doing so. Our oral tradition died, so we are by necessity lovers of books. This should not reflect badly upon us, that is, if our precious books are well thumbed and if we have the humility – an under-used word in Western magic – to learn from those wiser than us, whether they have taken bodies or are in aerial form.

We approach other traditions looking for more than a *low magic*, as Frisvold's masterful study of Palo Mayombe, and in this collection Ifa, shows the sophistication of African philosophy and cosmology. There are many worlds to explore, and it is a process which flows in all four directions. Pomba Gira luxuriates in her Portuguese and Gypsy blood. The Exus correspond with the spirits of the *Grimorium Verum*. Espiritismo cruzado responds to need and circumstance. Narco saints are fledged from the fresh bodies of the fallen. Magic has always been a crossroads art. From Alexandria to Toledo practitioners have met and discussed and shared their approaches. There is no pure blood myth at play here. Nobody owns this.

What happens now is what this book presents. A fresh mixing, which is not manifesto, but manifest: from Brazil to Bristol to Brixton to Brooklyn, from the traditional to the artistic avant-garde. The crossroads is, beyond all else, a transmission station, and the cosmos is listening to us through myriad crackling stars. The ways are open.

If you keep up with modern trends in the occult communities, then you have likely been hearing a lot about African Traditional Religions (or ATRs) over the last several years. The term generally applies to religions and folk traditions that originated in Africa, then took on new forms here in the Americas during the periods of the slave trade (or what is called the African Diaspora). Once here, they intermixed with various Latino and Caribbean folk traditions, as well as with Christianity, to form something uniquely American – meaning both North and South American. There are many and varied traditions that fall under the ATR umbrella – such as Santeria, Palo, Voodoo, Candomble and even the practice of Hoodoo.

FOLK TRADITIONS AND THE SOLOMONIC REVIVAL

Not very long ago, these traditions were strictly taboo among modern Western occultists – right along with certain subjects like animal sacrifice, the summoning and binding of spirits, necromancy (or other work involving the dead) and ritual possession – all of which are central to the ATRs and other ancient folk traditions. Likewise, spirits, angels and gods were supposed to be nothing more than psychological constructs that we humans made up to represent portions of our brains or personalities. To suggest that such creatures might be very real, with an existence quite objective from the magician, was to engage in silly superstition from the past that we moderns have left behind. Those who practiced the ATRs were seen as dark and even evil people who use black magick to bring harm upon themselves and others.

There was a time when I would have written 'thankfully, this is changing today' – but we are beyond that point now. Today you would be hard-pressed to find an occultist so willing to engage in that kind of ignorance and racism. (Although, to be honest, there are still a few left who haven't yet gotten a clue. Just a few weeks ago, I came across a blog post by a self-proclaimed Wiccan who decried the ritual use of skulls – a hallmark of ancestral traditions – along with any individual who would engage in such a practice. I am pleased to say she was soundly shouted down and her ignorance pointed out – even by Wiccans.)

So, what changed? Why are the ATRs and Hoodoo such hot topics these days, and why are Western occultists finally willing to look toward these systems for tips, tricks and magickal wisdom? One probability is the advent of the Internet, which has turned the entire world into the kind of social melting pot that the United States once prided itself upon. We no longer depend on what one biased group or another has to say about a foreign tradition or the people who practice it. We can now hear the truth straight from the source, whether through email or forums or websites or blogs or youtube videos.

Another factor, often overlooked, is hurricane Katrina's devastation of Louisiana and Mississippi, the veritable homeland of the ATRs here in the U.S. The rich culture of New Orleans, especially, was suddenly flung far and wide across the United States in what I have come to call the 'Second Diaspora.' The thousands of displaced residents, overwhelmingly of African descent, took their religions and witchcraft

with them to new locations thereby disseminating them into communities that were traditionally WASP oriented.

A third factor was the entrance of Caucasian people – for the first time ever – directly into the ATRs themselves. This began, at least to my knowledge, sometime during the mid to late 1990s. At first, it seemed like it was going to be a massive controversy within the ATR communities. In previous generations, their secrets were strictly forbidden to the white man, and you had to possess the right blood line to even hope for initiation. I am not sure why this began to change when it did, or how the first walls of exclusion were broken down. I can say, however, that much of the controversy over the subject died away faster than you might expect, most likely thanks to the Internet melting-pot and the necessities for survival inflicted on the traditions by Katrina.

So that is why, I believe, the ATRs are no longer the taboos they once were in the eyes of Western occultists. What was once obscure and hidden, and therefore frightening to those ignorant of the facts, has been thrust into the light. It is no longer dark and scary, but has become recognized as a legitimate occult tradition born from ancient shamanic roots.

There is another factor that has played an equally important role in bringing the ATRs and Western occultism together in a direct partnership: the medieval Solomonic grimoires.

The grimoires are magick books that were written several hundred years ago, largely by European Christians. You've probably heard of many of them - such as the *Key of Solomon*, the *Lemegeton* (including the *Goetia*, *Almadel of Solomon*, etc), the *Book of Abramelin*, *The Magus*, the *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, the *Heptameron* (aka *The Magickal Elements*) and dozens of others that have been popularized in fiction (and hundreds of more obscure texts that have not been). For the past several centuries, these books had been gathering dust on library shelves, and only crusty old Masons or Golden Dawn adepts seemed to find them interesting. Therefore, you may be forgiven if you question how these Western Christian texts could have the least part to play in the modern occult revival, especially where the ATRs are involved. And that is where my own story enters the picture.

THE SOLOMONIC MAGE AND THE PALERO

I have written many times that my path into paganism and the occult began in earnest during my brief time in Denver, Colorado and the Larkspur Renaissance Festival. It was there I first came to practice Wicca and learn the basics of magick. However, I did not truly come into my own until I had returned home to Orlando, Florida in the mid-1990s. It was there that I began to put myself through the eleven lessons of Donald Michael Kraig's *Modern Magick* as well as reading everything I could get my hands on concerning the Golden Dawn and ceremonial magick. (Not to mention large stacks of anthropology and archeology books about the religious practices of such ancient cultures as Egypt, Sumeria, Babylon, Palestine, etc). I also developed the fairly common mindset of a ceremonial mage, taking a psychological view of magick and the spiritual entities it calls upon. I believed these gods and angels were real in their own sense, but that their names and faces were human inventions, intended to facilitate our attempts to interface with an otherwise generic universal energy.

Sometime during all of this, I came into contact with a curious individual by the name of Stewart Myers. Though, today you might know him better by the name Ochani Lele. At the time we met, he was a British Traditional Wiccan (from Lady Sheba's lineage no less) who was also a practicing Qabalist, a very rare mixture at the time. He was just finishing the manuscript for his first book *Between the Worlds* which he would eventually publish through Llewellyn Worldwide. It was about the 'Wiccan Qabalah,' an interpretation of Wicca through the lens of the Western Qabalah. (To this very day it is one of the best books about Wicca I have ever read.) Because he and I shared this dual-classification of Wiccan and Qabalist, we became fast friends.

However, Wicca would not ultimately be Stewart's true calling. Not long after I got to know him, he discovered something that deeply inspired him, an ATR tradition called Palo Mayombe. He felt that Palo's basic worldview was very similar to British Wicca, and the manner in which Paleros performed their witchcraft was similar to his own style and methods. The system, or perhaps I should say the gods of that system, called him very strongly and it was not long before he left Neopaganism (and Orlando) behind to take his initiation into Palo. It looked as if he and I were going our separate ways, and it was in fact a few years before I encountered him again.

If you have read *Secrets of the Magickal Grimoires*, then you've seen some of what happened next. I discovered that Stewart had moved back to Orlando when I found him working overnight in a local gas station. I was working overnights myself, and would often get off work at three or four in the morning. Since I had to pass by that very gas station on my way home, I found myself often stopping in to see how he was doing. More often than not, I would end up staying for several hours until his shift ended talking back and forth about the things we had learned of magick during our years apart. He was by then a fully-fledged Palero and had become an initiate of Santeria as well. I had finally begun to indulge my passion for the medieval Solomonic grimoires, although I admit it was largely from a Golden Dawn perspective. (If you have read Crowley's introduction to the *Goetia*, you have a good idea of how I saw things at the time. And my method of practice was largely as you see in the later chapters of Don Kraig's book.)

As many of you are surely aware, folks from the ATRs do not hold the magick-cum-psychology views that are common in the West. Gods and spirits, for them, are not constructs made up by humans as convenient tools, but are in fact real and objective beings with lives and minds of their own. And, with this being the case, it meant that the laws and protocols associated with calling and interacting with such beings – those 'silly superstitions' I mentioned previously have real meaning and purpose in the ATRs. For example, making offerings and sacrifices to spiritual beings was necessary because the spirits needed to be fed in order to do their work. Yet, to me, the concept of offering food to a 'psychological construct' made absolutely no sense.

At first, I balked at much of what Stewart had to say, and I argued my stance quite valiantly. I knew what I was talking about dammit, but he just didn't see things my way. Of course, he had come from my worldview to begin with, so he already knew the arguments. And, thanks to keeping an open mind, it wasn't long before I realized that he and I were simply coming from two different paradigms and there was no reason for either of us to try and convert the other. From then on, my

arguments turned to simple curiosity. I love to hear people from different walks of life explain their ways to me, especially when the subject is religion or magick. And that, I think, is where it all changed for me.

You see, as I mentioned, I was already doing my best to work with the grimoires. However, the standard Golden Dawn model wasn't working out too well in that regard. I was doing all the usual rituals, Lesser and Greater Pentagram rituals, Hexagram rituals, Middle Pillars, Openings by Watchtower and the like, and I was adding to them various invocations, talismans and other odds and ends from the grimoires. My success was limited. I got some results, but not what I was looking for. Not to mention the fact that I could tell the G.D. rituals just weren't meshing with what was presented in the medieval texts. In practice, it literally felt like I was halting a spell in progress in order to do a Pentagram or Hexagram ritual, then returning to the original spell again to recite the grimoiric invocation or conjuration. I was, in fact, trying to work two systems of magick at the same time – and I suppose deep down I knew it.

Then I began my talks with Stewart. And once I began to really listen to him, rather than argue in favor of my own preconceived notions, I discovered something curious: he kept saying things that I had already read in sources like Agrippa's *Occult Philosophy*, or the Keys of Solomon, or the *Arbatel*. Before very long, I realized that this Palero's worldview was more akin to that of the old grimoire masters than my own.

At first, I would point out to him where his ideas agreed with something the grimoires had to say. Before long, I found myself bringing the books to him when I discovered something in them that made no sense to me. I would show him the passage that had confused me or seemed outlandish, and he would most often reply with something like, *Oh yeah! We do that, too*, and then proceed to explain why such a thing might be done in his path. (He would not willingly reveal oath bound information to me, but we spent many hours talking when he was dead exhausted and not exactly thinking straight about where that line should be drawn.) I was smart enough to realize that I was receiving the oral teachings that the Solomonic mages would have received from their teachers, and that were largely missing from the written text of the grimoires.

My excitement understandably grew, and I would often relate the things I had learned to my girlfriend who was a fellow practitioner. She was fascinated by the things I was learning, and so I brought her to meet Stewart for the first time. In the end, she became his god-sister and began to practice what has been called 'spiritual' Palo. (Meaning she was learning the system, up to a point, but was not formally initiated, or scratched.) Had I felt a sufficient calling by the African gods I would likely have followed, and I'm sure she and I would have been fully initiated, but my calling was from the spirits and angels of the grimoires.

So I was content to stay where I was and simply learn everything I could from Stewart and the other ATR practitioners with whom we eventually came into contact. I dare say we became more involved in the local Santeria and Palo communities than we had ever been with the local Neopagans. What I learned over the next decade has been invaluable to my path and practice, and it is why I believe to this very day that I could never have mastered the grimoires without the ATRs.

Of course, I eventually learned that the grimoires and the ATRs have real historical connections as well. The grimoires themselves draw much from African pa-

ganism. Though their sources are primarily northern (like Egypt), there can be no doubt that there was communication between the ancient African cultures and that their magickal systems were fundamentally similar. I then learned that several of the grimoires were later brought to America by European immigrants, and that those grimoires became influential on the ATRs – perhaps none moreso than upon Hoodoo and conjure magick in the American south. (Those old root doctors apparently had no trouble recognizing the similarities between the European books and their own traditions.) However, I have written about these subjects elsewhere, and that isn't what this essay is about.

Many years later, the publication of *Secrets of the Magickal Grimoires* led me to the discovery that I was not the only modern Solomonic mage influenced by the ATRs. Apparently, I wasn't innovating anything new, but merely riding a rising occult current that hadn't yet crested. The African traditions and the grimoires have been dancing with one another for centuries, one taking the lead at one period, and the other taking the lead in the next. It was simply time for that to happen again, and it was the ATR's turn to lend wisdom to the Solomonic tradition. The only thing I can proudly own in this, is my willingness to be among the first to stand up and say such a thing in public.

I expected a backlash, but what I got instead was a resounding response of *Hey, me too!* Again and again I encountered folks who were practicing the grimoires and augmenting that practice with wisdom from Santeria, Palo, Candomble, Hoodoo and other related systems. Some of them were like me, basically outsiders who were discovering the ancient wisdom for the first time. Yet, a surprising number of them were ATR insiders. Some of them began in the African traditions and discovered the grimoires later, while others began with the grimoires and were led thereby to the ATRs. One friend of mine who falls into the latter camp has often remarked how shocked his teachers have been when he says something about magick they were certain Westerners didn't know. It amazed them to learn that white folks actually do have magick that 'actually works.' This friend of mine related with humor how often he had to bite his tongue and keep from laughing when his teachers would reveal a Great Mystery to him that he had read years previously in the *Arbatel* or Agrippa's work.

WHITE MEN CAN'T CONJURE

So why is it the rest of the world has such opinions about Westerners and our spirituality? What puts us in such a unique position where we have earned the reputation for not getting it? We certainly have our mysteries and mystical practices, but where it comes to practical magick, the sad fact is that we have been largely cut off from many of our own roots. When the medieval Roman Catholic Church rose to power, they systematically outlawed the old ways. It wasn't merely about eradicating witchcraft and occultism, that was just the propaganda, it was truly about eradicating the deep-rooted cultural traditions that formed the bedrock of our culture, and which the Church authorities saw as competition to their own political power.

For example, we often hear that necromancy was outlawed because it was a devilish practice that depended upon the power of Satan for its effectiveness. What you do not hear is that necromancy was an aspect of ancestor worship, and that part of outlawing it involved making it illegal to bury your family mem-

bers on your own land. Suddenly, you were required to bury your dead in Church-sanctioned graveyards. This effectively removed one of your most solid claims to ownership of your ancestral land. It was no longer the place where you could prove your forefathers lay buried. It made it easier for authorities to come along and kick you out of your home and take state ownership of the land your family had left to you. This also supported the ultimate goal of breaking up family clans, and the political power and wealth that often went along with them.

Even what the Church called witchcraft involved family traditions that had been passed down from generation to generation for hundreds and thousands of years. To break up the families and make the people dependent upon the state, it was necessary to break the lines of their established traditions. To do that, it was necessary to remove the influence of grandparents upon their grandchildren and all of the family lore that was previously passed down from one to the other. Where a person's familial and spiritual identity, and by extension political identity was once something inherited, it soon became something one learned in Church and Sunday School where it could be firmly controlled.

Of course, I don't lay all the blame for this at the feet of the medieval Church. Throughout history, new empires have sought to eradicate the culture of the empires before them, throwing civilization into one dark age after another. I focus upon the medieval Church in this essay because we are talking about medieval traditions, modern Western culture, and how we lost our ancestral connections. To this very day, we are not 'allowed' to work with the dead, to invite possession by our familiar spirits and ancestral Gods, to make offering and sacrifice in order to achieve favours from spirits, or even to treat the spirits as if they really exist at all. This has become so ingrained in our culture that it has carried on even without the threat of arrest and torture by Church authorities.

I dare say no modern author has tackled these realities more fiercely than Jake Stratton-Kent – author of *The True Grimoire* and *Geosophia*. He has done much to reveal the true origins of the Western Mystery Tradition, looking back beyond the urbanized Greeks and Romans to the earliest tribal cults. He explores a time when the Goen were socially accepted shamans, and not the 'debased dabblers in black magick' described in classical and medieval texts. He has done well in highlighting the astounding fact that our traditions, even the highest practices of divine theurgy, have their roots in the goetic traditions. They arose among cults that worshiped the dead and worked regularly with chthonic demons and spirits long before such spirits became classified as evil minions of Satan. And, most importantly, he has shone a spotlight on the people who worked diligently to cut our culture off from those primitive roots.

The medieval grimoires were a wonderful exception to that trend. While it is certain they bear the mark of their time and place, such as using the term goetia in a negative sense, or their constant confusion over whether one spirit might be an angel or a demon, or placing Satan in charge of all aerial and nature spirits, they still seemed to have been written by folks who knew something rotten was going down. They knew the old ways were being attacked and suppressed, and they certainly understood that someone had to preserve the ancient mysteries, in some form, so they might someday be revived. For all of the Christian dogma contained in the grimoires' introductory chapters, their authors were

keen to learn and record as many of the ancient secrets (aka occultism) they could lay their hands upon. These weren't the Christians who were burning witches, they were the ones working with the witches to learn what they could from them. These gems are hidden like treasure throughout the grimoires, covered over with Christian propaganda to obscure them from those who sought to destroy them.

Meanwhile, outside of mainstream Western culture, indigenous peoples around the world continued with their traditions. Even where Christianity succeeded in establishing a foothold, they were far less successful in eradicating the old ways. Non-Westerners were more apt to simply incorporate certain Christian concepts into their already-established traditions, and anything the missionaries had to say that didn't fit was tossed right out the window. Ancestral worship and honouring the dead continues to this day around the world, even in heavily Catholic regions like South America. The ATRs, bringing us back to the point of this essay, are another fine example. Folk magick and conjure are well established in such cultures, and Christian symbolism is just another tool set in their bag of tricks. Unlike us white folk, they were never successfully cut off from their families or their ancestral traditions. They continue to 'get it' today, where many Westerners are simply too far removed from the source.

REVIVING THE OLD MAGICK

That is, at least, until now. Over the past couple of generations, we have been awakening to the reality of our isolation and taking small steps toward fixing the problem. Neopaganism was a major step in the right direction. Say what you will of Wicca and its mainstream popularization, I can tell you from experience there is more nuts-and-bolts shamanism at its heart than it is given credit for. Now the grimoires, as their authors hoped would happen, are suddenly grabbing the attention of many who want more than self-help occultism. And the current fascination with the ATRs, Hoodoo, South American Brujeria, Italian Strega and many more ancient folk practices and religions is part of the same over-arching trend. We are, as Mr. Kent might say, returning to goetia in a big way.

And that is why I feel the current Western interest in the ATRs and other folk traditions is vital to the modern occult revival. If we are trying to reclaim our roots and return to the old ways, then we would be foolish indeed to ignore the cultures around us who never let them go in the first place. We thankfully have the grimoires, and similar Western source books like the Greek Magical Papyri, Cuneiform tablets, Egyptian papyrus and others, but they can only do so much for us. There are holes left to be filled, oral teachings to be reclaimed, little tips and tricks and secrets that we have lost and must revive. Traditions such as the ATRs have those things, and they are more willing today than ever before to share them with us, at least to some degree.

Now, of course, I'm not suggesting we engage in cultural appropriation. I don't think all Westerners should run off and initiate into Palo or Santeria (though I'm thankful for those few who have done so). And I certainly don't think we should steal from other cultures everything we can get our hands on and call them our own. Instead, we should be open to those other cultures and willing to learn what they are willing to teach. We can look at them and see what we are lacking, and then look into our own ancestral history to find our own versions of these things. The missing pieces are

there to be collected if we want to do so.

I was once given a hard time in a particular Voodoo/Hoodoo forum for mentioning my ideas on 'Solomonic Omiero' and 'Solomonic Ngangas,' I was attacked for using the terms *Omiero* and *Nganga*, and assured (by folks who had no clue who I was or what I practice) that I did not understand what either of those things were nor how to make them. And the very idea of a 'Solomonic' version of either was ludicrous. In fact, it was those poor souls who didn't understand. Though it fell on deaf ears at the time, I tried to make it clear in my writing that my use of the terms was loose at best, and I was in no way suggesting that my description of, for example, a 'Solomonic Nganga' was an accurate description of a Nganga from Palo Mayombe. I was using those terms because those were the terms I had learned from my ATR teachers and contacts, and I was relating them to already established Western traditions.

I am under no delusion that I know how to make a proper Nganga from the standpoint of Palo Mayombe. However, I know enough about them to recognize the similarity between them and the Brass Vessel from the *Goetia*, and various versions of spirit-pots found in older Western occult texts. In that forum, I was attempting to point out that similarity, and to use what I have learned from the ATRs to build upon the concept and create something workable from within my own culture.

That I don't know all the secrets of making a Palo Nganga has no bearing on my work in creating a Solomnic vessel for a Solomonic spirit. However, what I have learned about Ngangas from witnessing their construction and application has certainly informed my methods of creating a suitable home for a spirit, as well as how to properly work with it. My mistake in that forum and in previous areas, what got me accused of 'not getting it' and cultural appropriation, was nothing more than my use of the words Nganga and Omiero. Had I said Solomonic Spirit Pot, and Solominc Herbal Holy Water instead, I doubt I would have met the same resistance. Live and learn.

I do hope that you can clearly see the point I'm making. It is not my suggestion that we should all go out and start making Ngangas and Omiero or appropriating anything at all from foreign cultures. However, we absolutely must take our heads out of the Western sands and begin to take an interest in what our brothers and sisters in other traditions are doing. We lost our roots because we bought the propaganda and considered ourselves better than those around us, and fell for the racist fallacy that they had nothing to teach us.

We are, I assure you, going to get burned. We are not adepts at working with spirits and the dead. One friend of mine decided to create a Brass Vessel for the spirit Bune according to the instructions I had shared with him, but he made a serious mistake in working with the spirit and had his house burn down. He had asked for a specific amount of money, by any means necessary, and the insurance check for the house amounted to exactly what he asked for. Others are going to work with the dead, or with ritual possession, or with making offerings to spirits, and they are going to screw that up too. We Westerners are out of practice for these things, and have lost the connections to our traditions that included them. If we are going to reclaim them, you can bet your bottom dollar the first of us to do so are going to make mistakes and pay dearly for it.

But, that is absolutely no reason to sit back and use it as an excuse to avoid these practices altogether. In a hundred or a thousand years, there will be established

traditions for them in the West with fully vetted oral teachings to back them up, and lineages tracing back to none other than you and I. Our ancestral mysteries were not stripped from us in a single generation, and we won't fully reclaim them in just one or two either. We have been taking baby steps, from Spiritism in the 1800s to Neopaganism in the 1900s to the Solomonic movement of today. And each generation gets a little better at it, and is willing to learn more and more from the cultures around us.

As I said previously, what I received from Ochani Lele were oral teachings that were either missing from or cleverly buried within the grimoires. As an example, before my discussions with him, the *Book of Abramelin* was an enigma to me. I felt strongly called to it, and yet largely locked away from what it was trying to get across to me. Ochani pulled me out of the magick as psychology mindset, as well as the concept that spiritual entities are something to be summoned, ordered around and then banished away again. He taught me about building long-term relationships with them instead. He taught me about the head-spirit, and described to me a path in his tradition called Ocha in which your patron deity is literally not figuratively or metaphorically bonded to your skull. A kind of permanent possession where you and your head-spirit become married as one. Only then did I get the process being described by the *Book of Abramelin* and began to truly grasp what gaining Knowledge and Conversation with one's Holy Guardian Angel was really all about.

I also learned from Ochani that spirits are real, not psychological constructs created as visual aids. Like you and I, they have personalities, likes and dislikes, things that attract them and things that repel them. And I learned that attempting to work with them without understanding those things was a waste of time at best, and downright dangerous at worst. Once I grasped that, all of the protocols and rules concerning how to summon and interact with them preserved for us in the grimoires suddenly made sense. Arthur Waite once wrote that a 'superstition' was merely a practice for which we have forgotten the purpose thus, all of the instructions in the grimoires ceased to be superstitions for me. At last, I had recovered their purpose.

Plus, I learned one secret that trumped all the others. It is a secret of vast importance, but is mostly overlooked by Western occultists: establishing contact and interacting with the spirits is merely the beginning of the Art. What is supposed to happen next is scarcely mentioned by the grimoires, yet it is the true goal of the work: to learn magick directly from the spirits themselves.

The Solomonic grimoires are called Keys for a reason, because they are intended to help us unlock the doors between us and the spiritual entities. Once that is done, it is up to us to ask the spirits and angels what they require to make the magick work. It is they, and not the books, that will ultimately teach us what offerings they want, what magickal tools they need and what rituals we must perform in order to gain their familiarity. They will tell you what foods you should and should not eat, what clothing you should and should not wear, even what spiritual path you should follow and much more. What they teach you will override anything you've read in a book, and can in fact be the source for new books and new (or revived) traditions.

I feel Westerners make their biggest mistakes in this area. We tend to think what we see in the grimoires is the be-all and end-all of the magick. Follow the instructions, summon the spirit, give it instructions and

send it on its way. I have come to call this the summon-command-banish formula. However, it is not enough to merely call a spirit or angel or saint and tell it what you need. It is necessary to ask the spirit what we need to do in order to obtain what we need. It is then we will be given instructions, offerings to make (and how to make them), rituals to perform and even mundane actions we should take. Likewise, our familiars and patrons will instruct us on how to construct their altars, how to care for and feed them, how to call upon them in the future and more. These are the things that make a living tradition of magick that works.

Once I understood this aspect of the work, the breadth and depth of what I have learned in the years since has been truly astounding. I've learned much from books and oral teachings, and continue to do so today. Yet, my true magick has come from the direct teachings of my Holy Guardian Angel and other patrons and familiars.

That is why I have to chuckle when someone like a Santero or Palero arrogantly proclaims that I don't even know what a spirit pot (or what-have-you) is and therefore can't make one, when I have in fact been instructed on their creation by the very spirits that will live in them. They have either told me directly what they require, or led me to sources that contain the necessary information (written, oral or both). They have told me how they desire their altars to be constructed and what offerings to place upon them. Whenever I consecrate a talisman, I always ask the angel connected to it to teach me how to put the talisman to use, which always involves more than just leaving it laying around and expecting it to work.

This is the key difference between the folk traditions who have reputations for working quickly and powerfully and the Western traditions with their reputation for *not getting it*. It is a simple, yet vastly significant, step that our modern traditions often fail to take. But if you choose to correct this in your own practice, whatever your tradition, from Wicca to the Golden Dawn to the Solomonic grimoires, you will soon find your results are shockingly effective. Accept that the spirits and gods of your tradition are quite real, ask them what they require and learn to listen to their answers, and you will become one of the growing number of Westerners who do *get it* and you will gain access to a new kind of magick that works.

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NECROMANCY

THE ROLE OF THE DEAD IN A LIVING TRADITION

Jake Stratton-Kent

It is my contention that the role of the dead has been largely excised from Western magic, in contrast to every other tradition in the world. A tremendous gap of comprehension arises in consequence, as well as crippling losses to magic in terms of rationale, social relevance, comparative understanding and a variety of other respects.

The main thrust of my argument concerns mainstream Western magic, as derived from the grimoires. Implied too is subsequent effects upon ceremonial magic of various types in the modern period. The exceptions to my critique are largely to be found in other areas of contemporary Western magic, as well as in older folklore, spiritualism and elsewhere. Though important, these exceptions are separate from the historical mainstream of Western ceremonial magic, and their existence does not alter my main points.

As my writings are intended to clarify, the grimoire tradition has its roots not in a mythical Solomon, but a very real background in ancient Greece and the later Hellenistic world. This is where the term goetia has its origin and derives its real context. Some major themes have been obscured in the historical life of this most central of all strands of Western magic, and this essay deals with some of them.

The literary lineage of the grimoire tradition chronologically is the Orphic books, the magical papyri and the Byzantine literature which derived from them. This stream eventually bumped into medieval Christianity and the Renaissance Neoplatonists. The impact of this produced the grimoires, and altered the original conception in various ways. Among these was wholesale use of barbarous names derived from the Kabbalah. This is readily comparable to use of barbarous names in earlier periods, and presents relatively few major difficulties of continuity. One such difficulty is that modern magicians have become convinced that they have to study the Kabbalah in order to operate, and can more or less ignore the Græco-Roman inheritance completely. This response is something Renaissance mages – who were inspired by access to Hellenistic literature from the Arab and Byzantine worlds – would have found nonsensical. It is also a historical absurdity; certainly the Solomonic grimoires are a major part of our magical heritage, but it is equally important to understand their real roots, and in some cases return to them.

Another more drastic alteration in the genre was the near erasure of references to the dead as active agencies in magical operations. The Church was often much more accommodating of old customs than has been thought. However, ancient funerary rites and cultic reverence for the ancestors formed a major exception, they were entirely too pagan and too linked to magical practices. Consequently the Church very largely took on complete responsibility for this aspect of human existence, as well as introducing new ideological perspectives. Many of these are interesting in

their own right; for example the role of Purgatory in permitting the African Diaspora to employ Christian frames of reference in adapting their traditions to the New World.

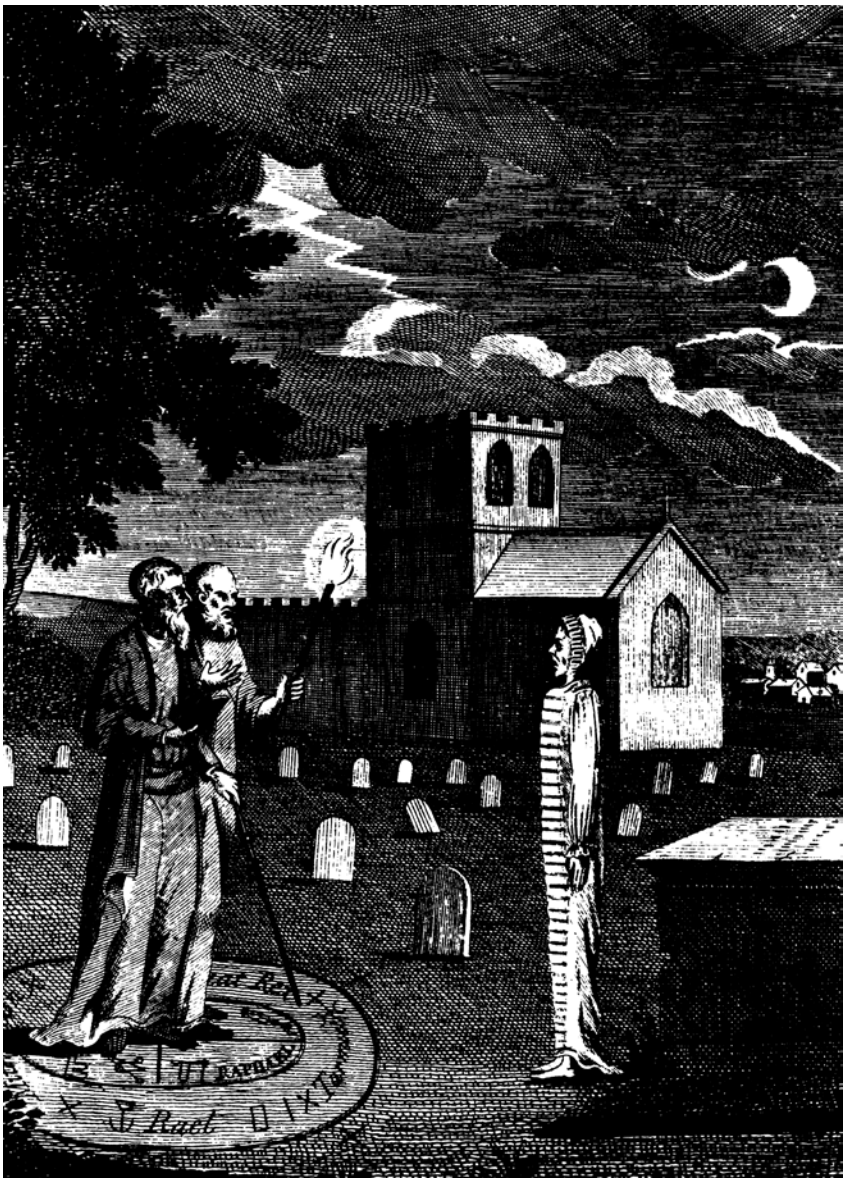
For the most part however the dead became separated from magical lore in accord with the new doctrine, with far reaching negative consequences. Most obviously, the varied roles of the dead in archaic goetia were largely lost. Texts like the *Goetia of Solomon* essentially replaced the dead, who were the chief agencies of Hellenistic magic, with Fallen Angels. Aside from the heavenly angels and some few others, spirits of this type are nowadays seen as the active spirits of much of the entire grimoire genre. In texts such as Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* however at least some of them bear an alternative title, aerial demons. As I have shown in my *Geosophia*, this title points to their real origin in Hellenistic lore. In short, this same title originally designated the dead of pre-Christian goetia.

The *Key of Solomon* has no chapter devoted to the important topic of necromancy. That this should be lacking, while there is a comparatively trivial chapter on causing a hunter to fail in catching any game, is certainly striking. That it is a deliberate omission is suggested by the presence in the timing section of the grimoire to lunar positions and planetary days and hours suitable for conjuring the dead. In an essay entitled *The Fourth Book*, in the book of the same name, Agrippa records magical ceremonies of the early grimoire era. Therein the dead, as well as nature spirits, are still enumerated among those conjured by magicians of his time. More or less precise instructions are given, and suggest that magicians of his time were involved in just such operations.

Aside from such rare indications, the dead appear to have been largely excised from the grimoire literature. Generally speaking, the only sign of their former status in the grimoires as they stand is the occasional ghost. These, summoned at the graveside, beside a gibbet or at the scene of a suicide, were all of the lowest type and comparatively recently deceased. In the older systems the dead did not form such a simple and lowly blanket category, they were arranged in a hierarchy with many parallels – or edited borrowings – in Qabalistic spirit hierarchies. Some were considered as thousands of years old, no tampering with corpses was necessary in such cases. Many were in fact deceased magicians or initiates, an important example being the Dactyls of Mount Ida. These were revered founders of traditions upon which the entire Western Magical Tradition has its remotest roots. When we consider how supposed demons are often treated by modern occultists, this former status should at very least give us pause for thought. Dead magicians – re-titled demons in a later era – may be none too pleased with their latter day counterparts. Indeed, unless magic evolves appropriately, some modern magicians may be equally dismayed when their time comes.

In the earlier forms of the tradition there is, quite simply, no precedent for the virtual absence of the dead in the major grimoires. Nor in other magical traditions worldwide, from which we would otherwise be able to learn a good deal more readily.

Oddly the term necromancy hung around, although transmogrified – possibly to conceal the peculiarity of this change – into the term nigromancy; thus hiding the change under the term *black divination* which makes no real sense whatever. It has also not lost its associations with goetic magic, even though the link between them has become somewhat amorphous.



This is a strange situation, and one which a good many grimoire magicians would rather ignore perhaps, as it requires adjustments and rethinking. However, in reality some of the practical changes are relatively slight. As Aaron Leitch has pointed out more than once, the rites of the *Key of Solomon* are not addressed to any particular spirits, but simply summons those that might be available without identifying them. There is in fact a world of difference in the conception underlying the *Key*, and that underlying the *Goetia of Solomon*.

Greater difficulties arise in adjusting the latter to a truly necromantic (and thus properly goetic) perspective. *Geosophia* focuses a strong and penetrating light on this important but neglected issue. This is necessary for various reasons, chief of which is that goetic magic is the only genuinely continuous tradition in the whole corpus of Western magic, and is the root of much else within it. It is therefore intolerable that the very term should be misunderstood as a reference to a book written thousands of years after the term was coined. In this mistaken form some of the most important elements of the tradition are completely absent; the dead being perhaps the most important of all.

Necromancy survived more visibly in the activities of the Cunning men, folk customs and later Spiritualism. These customs and beliefs were however no part of the Golden Dawn/Crowley synthesis, and are very largely absent from the grimoires, though for different reasons. This, along with a certain prejudice against Spiritualism on the part of Crowley, and the ambivalent relationship it had with Theosophy, have had a dramatic effect on the modern synthesis. Absent from the Western Magical Tradition today, among both moderns and traditionalists is what we might call a well-developed 'practical eschatology.' This is so fundamental and all-encompassing a component both in folk and classical religion that its absence, once noted, is truly bizarre.

An important rider is that the modern Western Magical Tradition is largely a product of the English speaking and Protestant world. These observations do not therefore hold true among African or Hispanic traditions &c, even though modern magic is penetrating South American occultism and vice versa.

Next question, what is 'goetia' anyway? It is a much older term than 1640, and originally had nothing whatever to do with Fallen Angels. It had a whole lot more to do with the dead: Goetia and Necromancy are – or at least were – virtually equivalent terms prior to popular usage in recent Anglophone circles. Dealings with the dead were central to late Græco-Roman magic, as well as important in late pagan European religion in general. It is a fact that funerary customs were an area where the Church was less tolerant than of other customs. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the clerical underground edited classical magic into the grimoire form to reflect this change of emphasis: the dead, in all their variety, were largely excised, and replaced by Fallen Angels i.e. demons.

It is interesting to note that the dead who remain in grimoire practice are virtually always of the lower echelons (executed criminals, suicides and other 'angry' or 'restless' ghosts) omitting ancestors, heroes and demigods who were important categories before. The one exception is the Saints, generally omitted by modern pagans adapting these sources, and frequently misunderstood by more conventional grimoirists.

As mentioned above, another important term for 'evil' spirits in Western magic is aerial demons (see Agrippa et al). If we trace this back to its Greek roots

it is strongly connected with the dead as a boisterous but by no means exclusively evil category of spirits (see Plutarch, Iamblichus et al). This connection has been suppressed in the grimoire tradition as we inherit it.

Thus aside from the angels of safe or permitted magic (sic), grimoire spirits are called evil and misidentified as Fallen Angels for largely theological reasons unconnected to – and corrosive of – the magical tradition itself. The misidentification is made even worse in the influential Golden Dawn redrafting and its successors. There the term qlipoth is applied to spirits (and magic) with little if any real connection with Kabbalah. It is of course impossible to force spirits like Vassago into such a category with any conviction. Only the secondary role of spirits in modern magic, compared to rampant book-worship, makes such inconsistencies invisible.

That planetary angels and demons are two sides of the same coin is largely a matter of historical fact, and the ambivalent nature of the Archons has been cited already. Incidentally, note the facelessness of most angels in the grimoires, compared to the much clearer personalities of the demons. Also note that – as various authors ancient and modern have observed – planetary and other astrological spirits are as likely to be called demons as angels. They are, in many respects, the same critters, forced into a dualistic schema.

There will be technical issues so long as we continue to over-emphasise and imagine the Kabbalah rather than Classical magic to be the main root of our traditions. A comparison of ancient goetia with the practice of the ATRs is in fact essential to the growth of modern magic and cannot be sidestepped to any advantage. The influence of the ATRs is becoming all embracing, and the potential for a synthesis that we can participate in meaningfully requires us to re-examine the real origins of Western magic and the nature of the spirits.

So we come finally to the crux of the issue, the matter of eschatology. In modern magic we are accustomed to attributing various spirits and ranks of spirit to the rungs of a celestial ladder, the foremost example being the Tree of Life. So too we envisage ourselves ascending this ladder in various ways, either on a journey (path working), as stages of attainment (qabalistic grades) and so on. Both are relatively recent approaches. A century or so ago the higher grades of the Tree were seen as attainable only after death, it was Crowley who popularised the idea of crossing the Abyss while in life. So too once we examine the roots of path workings or astral journeys upon the Tree, it is clear they are more a foretaste than the main event. This leads us to consider the spirits associated with these realms – and indeed ourselves – from a perspective at once new and unspeakably archaic.

Firstly let us re-examine the context outlined above: there is a clear connection between the ideas of a journey and of an incremental process of attainment through grades attributed to the sequence of rungs. This portrays an evolutionary process in which the post mortem state is implicit in some stages at the very least. Once this information is added back into the equation it can be seen that the spirits occupying these realms are not mere picturesque residents for the edification of astral tourists. They are beings at various stages of evolution, among whom we may expect to be enlisted at various points of our future evolution. When that is, our journey is not a foretaste of what is to come, but the main event.

Clearly the entire idea of a spirit realm, and of dealings with spirits, has an eschatological basis which has

been lost sight of in the modern era. The evolutionary process is one in which both initiates and spirits alike have a very real interest. This provides a context in which spirits have motives for wishing to work with us. In the default modern model such a motive is virtually absent; they are portrayed essentially as unpaid tradesmen or shopkeepers who pander to magicians for no apparent reason other than coercion. This is philosophically unsatisfying. Once Western magic acknowledges and reconnects with the central neglected aspect of its very origins, occultism becomes more nourishing and meaningful for practitioners and aspirants, but also potentially for the wider community.

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ILLUSTRATION

Edward Kelly, a Magician, in the Act of invoking the Spirit of a Deceased Person from *A New and Complete Illustration of the Occult Sciences* by Ebenezer Sibly.

THE INVISIBLE CITY IN THE REALM OF MYSTERY

Our modern world is a market, and like any market it is subject to the powers that uphold it. It is often about money, competition and ambition as the demiurgus of the world of matter inspire it to be. Tradition is today either misapprehended or seen as outdated and arcane, since it fails to give any importance to personal faith and creative magical 'systems' and taxonomies born from fantasies and wishful thinking. Out of this arise practitioners claiming to be traditional merely by the virtue of obsessing with reshaping something arcane into something personal and 'owned.' Tradition proper is indeed creative and does adopt itself to changing times – but it never allows the development of new and personal structures that defy its own foundation. Tradition will always express structures born from timeless truths that are and will be from eternity to eternity. Tradition is preserved in the metaphysical dimensions of a cult and it is from investigating this that it can be seen if the tradition in question is rightfully traditional or is in fact a pseudo-tradition. It is not sufficient for a tradition to be passed on as an owned lineage; it must also have a genuine rapport with the source – thus forming the crossroad composed of the vertical and horizontal flux of power. The divine flame as passed from man to man and the prophetic light ever vibrant and continually descending.

Sometimes tradition can lose its traditional expression by being misapprehended by its practitioners, but still be true to its core even though it is difficult to see due to the many layers of distorted opinion that are arrayed around it. Ifá expresses this complexity beautifully and reveals itself to be a traditional faith; furthermore it proves useful as a measure for what can be seen as traditional itself. Ifá is the observance of the Yoruba people of the South West coast of Africa. During the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade from the 14th to 19th century this rich heritage crossed over and took shape in the variety of Orisa cults we find in the New World, such as Candomblé in Brazil, Lucumi and Santeria in Cuba and Sango Baptism in Trinidad. These faiths are now spreading over the world and make part of what is referred to as the African Traditional Religions.

Significant for a true traditional faith is its ability to adapt without losing its identity. When Orisa cults set foot on the various shores of the New World they allowed the land to wield and shape the cult in conformity with the social needs and the pulse of nature. This is only natural, as Orisa is the consciousness within particular natural phenomena and opens into personal experience of this particular phenomenon. This is wonderful, but one important aspect of the cult did not make the crossing successfully – namely the prophetic light of the tradition, Ifá. Ifá is not only a name that describes a system of divination, but it reveals a metaphysics that indicate Ifá to be a stable and eternal truth. Ifá means *to pull together* or *to bring together* – with the aid of dynamic power. The spirit of Ifá, Orunmila, *heaven's witness* known as the spirit who knows the destiny of all things is the prophet of Ifá, the embodiment of the oracular insight possible when a man accepts his destiny and is in constant connec-

tion with the source. An inherent harmony and agreement is unfolded by understanding the most practical steps and consequences in our life and the principle that guides them. Unfortunately Ifá did not enter the New World complete, shards and pieces were brought sporadically, in particular to Cuba, and the missing pieces were restored not by ancestral wisdom, but sometimes by personal opinion and at other times by the land itself. This led to Ifá turning into something more like a religion than the philosophy of life held amongst the Yoruba. What was mainly missing from the equation as Ifá was restituted in the New World was the metaphysics pulsating underneath the tradition. Fundamental principles of Ifá, like the idea of *ori*, or consciousness, *iwa rere* or good/calm/happy character and *kadara*, destiny, got lost in the crossing. But this is as it is supposed to be, Ifá is very clear in pointing out that every act, every choice and every step leads to a movement in conformity with that choice. If our choice is born from a sense of destiny and good character it will bring us towards all forms of abundance. Choice is everywhere – and choice is the marrow and nerves of Èsú. Ifá reveals that man tends to make choices that favor his ambitious fire and selfish tendencies; here we meet choice incarnated as the devil at the crossroads. It was making the wrong choice at the crossroads that caused the visible and invisible world to be driven apart and made the spirits retract to their Invisible City and left for humankind this mysterious world of choice and fragmentation.

Great Hermes,[1] Lord of knowledge and communication, is vividly present in our modern age of rapid change and interaction between people from the most diverse strands of culture and belief. Our modern age finds a space for everything, but predominantly – at least in the West – it focuses on the singular empowerment of the individual. From this arises a *zeitgeist*, or world spirit, that attends to individualism in a manner unique in the course of human evolution. Revolutions such as modern feminism, the hippie movement and the punk movement testify to what sorts of product our world spirit breeds. It is a spirit stretching out to define the individual as free and strong, capable of placing itself at the centre of the world and dictating that the cosmos follows its commands. This sounds like the premise of the sorcerer and the witch who strove towards commanding the sensual reality by deep knowledge of the laws of nature and genuine contact with spirits of stars and land. The great difference lays not so much in the aspiration as it does in the foundation. Whilst the medieval sorcerer understood the world on the basis of traditional doctrine, modern man understands the world on the basis of a modern paradigm that opposes the traditional doctrine. The modern paradigm opposes traditional doctrine by seeing traditional doctrine as obsolete and arcane, as our age is the age of personal truth. In this lies the greatest of the cardinal sins, hubris. Hubris is often translated as pride, but hubris refers to a particular form of pride, a dislocated solipsism. It is about 'sin' and the 'fall,' of forfeiting ones goals and forsaking one's destiny, in Greek: ἁμαρτία. Certainly the word 'sin' also carried associations of criminal behavior and deception, but this speaks of the consequences of forfeiting our station and not of the act itself. In Greek society the penalty for hubris was at its most extreme death, due to the harm it inflicted on the divine order. And here lies the great divide between traditional doctrine and the modern world spirit that the Cartesian heritage opened up, namely un-belief. This factor changed the

whole world as we know it. The idea of choosing faith or disbelief resulted in a choice not to believe in the celestial, generating and opening up into a world spirit which exalted the world of matter and man's ability to conquer the world so that he could establish himself as a world ruler. Again, in Antiquity this tendency would be looked down upon as a demiurgic work, fruits of a dislocated sense of self importance, hubris.

So, even living in a world where the exchange of information is as vivid as it was in the time of Alexander the Great and the Renaissance, the world spirit is distinctly different. This gives birth to many vulgar monsters from a composite of fantasy mistaken for knowledge in its disregard of any traditional foundation. At times modern magical systems are reminiscent of the work of the witch of antiquity, Erichto's, work – popularized by Mary Shelley in her novel *Frankenstein*. It is as if the excess of knowledge and spiritual possibilities, the New Age movement and modern forms of Theosophy has left modern man stranded on solitary islands. It is about 'my system,' 'my truth,' 'one's personal system.' Ifá is not a system and it is not personal – it is the timeless and transcendent truth of creation itself. If we reappraise Ifá from these original principles it will be possible to gain a firm understanding about how the laws of nature interact and enable us to understand and master our destiny. Doing this we bring the denizens of the 'Invisible City' to yet again take part in our world of mystery and bring us towards good fate and great destiny. In this lies the original power of the sorcerer, as the one who holds the powers of transformation, someone who knows how nature moves so that one's Fate can always be a happy one.

Fate is like the magical circle of the mage. The circle marks boundaries for a given possibility to occur. When the mage enters the centre of the circle, he or she establishes a particular axis for a given part of the world where Fate can be worked for better or for worse. The circle with its central axis is a recreation of the world, mirroring the cosmic design of creation. Within the circle mystery unfolds in conformity with one's intent, understanding and spirit connection. Ifá knows everything about your circle, the world you are and how it can interact in the best ways with the other concentric circles in the world and within the worlds themselves. In this way he is 'heaven's witness to all Fate.' To understand the laws of nature is essential for understanding our destiny, but when man is no longer living in nature but buildings of concrete and glass, it gets more difficult to understand ourselves and our station. By distancing oneself from nature its language turns gradually more obscure and opens itself to misinterpretations.

Contrary to its Orisa offshoots in the Diaspora Ifá is not a religion per se. It is a faith or rather a philosophy of life that appraises the unity of the visible and invisible and the divine manifestation in all of creation. This is evident in how the practitioners of Ifá define the religions brought to Africa with missions, such as Islam and Christianity. Prior to the arrival of these religions the Yoruba did not possess a word to describe religiosity as a distinct field of human activity, as something set aside from profane activity. The Yoruba word that was coined in reference to religion was *esin*, from *sin* – to serve. This referred to the modes of worship exemplified by Muslims and Christians while the Yoruba themselves were doing *asa ibile*, meaning, *doing the customs of the land*.

THE IDEA OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Fundamental for Ifá doctrine is the belief that the visible and the invisible world were once conjoined, a unity. Due to the pull towards the material the inhabitants of earth grew greedy and dislocated themselves from the cosmic centre – and a separation occurred. The source of wisdom, the other world, became invisible and due to the separation mankind was hived into confusion and bewilderment. Our world became a mysterious world. The divide between the visible and invisible realm is accordingly seen as a fallacy, a deviation from the original order. Ifá teaches that everything that exists is conscious. If we can name it, it is because it possesses a conscious existence. The Yoruba word for consciousness is *Ori* and we find this word in the term Orisa. One story in the Ifá corpus of verses tells how Ori was in the beginning a closed calabash that upon falling from a mountain was shattered, hence Orisa – shards of consciousness were scattered all over nature. Ifá is a philosophy that by spiritual and practical means seek to assemble these shards together again.

Ifá distinguishes between several forms of consciousness and the cosmic vibration they manifest. Amongst the many forms of consciousness we find Egúngún, Irunmole, Imole, Orisa, Eniyan and all things possessing *Awo*. Awo means mystery and is frequently used in reference to the Ifá priest, the diviner, the *Babal'awo*, *father of the mystery* or *father of secrets*. This mystery or secret is the hidden powers in nature responsible for creation and manifestation. It expresses the substance found in the 256 *odus* or *vibrations coming from the cosmic womb*. These 256 patterns are seen as the helix and matrix of all that there is. These 256 odus are accompanied by stories that tell how this particular energetic current manifests in the world and is the source of ancestral wisdom available to the Ifá priest. Ifá teaches that we stand on the shoulders of those that passed before us. Wisdom is passed through a generic family line and also the collective wisdom of humanity. The first is referred to as Egún, which is the spirit of a specific ancestor. We are all the last of a chain of Egúns, whose shoulders we stand upon. This ancestral comprehension is literally engraved in the bones of the ancestor, the pillars of wisdom. It serves as a testimony of origin. Egúngún is the collective memory of ancestry – and here we find a great gathering of wisdom that calls upon the manifestation of Orisa. Orisa is the spirit of intelligence manifested in nature, the rivers, woods, trees, plants, mountains, fire, waters and so forth. Ifá says there are 401 Orisa – which in Ifá cosmology indicates both a mystery of balance in creation and also that Orisa are countless. The ancestors serve as messengers for Orisa in the same way as Orisa serve as messengers for *Imole* (consciousness of starlight). This interaction is evident in the presence of Orisa whenever ancestors are called. We are all deeply intertwined with nature, after all the human being is a specific consciousness in nature – although in the modern marketplace this connection often seems dim and distant. Upon leaving this earthly journey we are elevated and conjoined with a force of nature and the less we understand the principles of nature the more difficult will the consequences of shedding our body be for us. A specific ancestor, Egún, represents a specific set of knowledge that is applied in both worlds mediated by the state of understanding possessed upon one's passing to the invisible realm. Ideally we will upon death join with a specific natural principle and continue to

have an influence in our bloodline. The modern condition contributes to break the effective bond between the worlds by the presence of ancestors that were lost, vulgarized and with no spiritual inclination. We stand on the shoulders of those that came before us and if spiritual want is the shoulders we stand on, we have something to mend and a task to accomplish. This is to heal a family curse. In Ifá terminology this is referred to as *Ibi Egun*, literally, *the bone of ancestors brings misfortune*. The family curse reveals itself in negative patterns that are passed on from parents to their children and continue negative cycles of misfortune. Ultimately this generates *ibi Orí* or a consciousness that pulls misfortune towards one's life manifesting in bad choices and a negative emotional range.

Here we encounter another fundamental concept in Ifá, *Ori*. Ori means both *head* and *consciousness*. The importance of Orí is seen in how Africans give great attention to the physical head and decorate it and make the hair beautiful. Remembered or not, this was in the past a way of beautifying the consciousness so it could serve as a remembrance of one's original good and gentle character. This used to serve as a reminder of one's ancestors' goodness and that you as the living link in this chain of goodness had an obligation to continue this legacy.

Everything that exists possesses Orí, this can be *ori rere* and *ibi ori*, which can be defined as 'a joyous consciousness' vs. 'a consciousness that draws negativity.' This idea is intimately linked to choice and at the heart of choice we find Esú. He is the guardian of consciousness. His name is derived both from Osun, the spirit who guards the cosmic consciousness and the name given to the red camwood that serves as a substitute for blood and menstruation, symbol of transformation by blood and fire. Ifá teaches that consciousness can transform itself without losing its integrity or sense of selfhood. It is a potential for ennobling which Ifá is speaking about, to become a better version of yourself. Here we encounter Esú, the mystery who questions your choices – and naturally, when questioned about choices we project and create devils. And we can go along with this, because a devil is an accuser who challenges your choices and forces you to do the right thing. Hence we meet Esú at every crossroads life provides. We often experience crossroads as chaos because it is here that choice occurs. This is telling for the importance of Esú, he is the chaotic force in creation that provokes us into making a choice. This means that Esú follows us as a shadow or a friend throughout our life. Esú being the mystery of choice also tells us that he is the source of diversity. He is the dice that decides the next step and it is your consciousness that enables you to take advantage of the result, or squander it. If you take advantage you gain *Ire* (good fortune). The Ire is a gift that should be used not only to make your own life better, but also to help and heal others. Ifá specifically tells us that if your life gets better, my life gets better. Ire always induces a sense of discovery and contentment, a newfound wisdom – you discovered the secret of a specific consciousness when you found Ire and through this meaning. This will aid you in your life and if shared can also aid others and you thereby contribute to make society more healthy. Baba Falokun once said that whatever you fix in your life can be turned into medicine for someone else. This is the idea of good fortune; it is a gift that will multiply when shared. When Esú brings ibi or misfortune this is noticed in blaming others and nurturing a false sense of self importance. This is the first step towards

harvesting misfortune, not only for yourself but also for those close to you. Blaming others for your bad choices or lack of good consciousness and awareness will always lead to diabolic encounters and situations. So, Ori and Esú teach us to take responsibility for our choices, never to blame others for bad choices and to share the fruits of good choices. This is the function of Esú who today is seen as the Devil's equal – and as any good devil he simply questions your choice and presents options. Esú is Orisa, he is the consciousness of the crossroads and the crossroads is where games of chance and choices take place. He is the necessary force of movement in creation.

Other Orisa that have a strong bearing on our life, and are well known throughout the Diaspora, are:

Obatala, the king of the white cloth. The white cloth is not only purity but also the realm of dreams. Obatala bears the teaching that everything that we find in existence has been caused by the path of imagination that is stirred within the source, the essence of creation. We then have Ososi, one of the hunters that represents the power of focus, this being for good or ill. The power of the waters of fertility belongs to Yemoja, the owner of all fishes and the secrets of emotions. Ogun is the primordial blacksmith who resides in the heart where the fires of passion are constantly forged into weapons of defense or protection. Osun is the power of the umbilical cord, abundance herself when she sets a child free in the world to search out its good fortune. The belly belongs to Oya and the winds generated by passions, digestion of choice, flight towards disaster or abundance. Sango owns the genitals conjoined with Esú, who uses the nape of the neck as his portal, and is the power of will seeking gratification. If we see this sequence of powers the success of its manifestation depends on Obatala, as the power that manifests our dreams. In reality, the equation is simple, bad dreams bring a bad sequence of manifestation and good dreams turn into a medicine for all of humankind. Everything in creation is by nature a dyadic unity and choice and perspective is what unveils an understanding of a given potency as either good or bad.

PATTERNS OF CREATION

The varied forms of consciousness, Orisa, exist because of Irunmole and Irunmole because of Imole. Irunmole are the forces in nature that created the earth, while the Imole is the spirit of stars and planets. Ifá sees it like this, *Olodumare*, the creative power extends to stellar bodies that in turn extends to planets and constellations that in turn extends to manifested nature and lastly to *Enyian*, humankind. It is truly a golden chain of manifestation that Ifá presents. Everything that is in existence is kept by this chain of gold which Obatala descended to create the human habitat and its inhabitants that make up what we know as our world. Ifá teaches that man is a microcosm; all forms of consciousness are found in our body. This idea is similar to the doctrine of chakras in Vedanta. In Ifá philosophy these points are known as Iwaju, meaning points or bridges where character is passing. We find here the crown of the head as a centre for Obatala, the third eye being Ososi, the nape of neck reserved for Esú. The neck itself belongs to Yemoja, the heart to Ogun, belly button for Osun, the stomach for Oya, genitals for Sango and the big toes for Egún (Left big toe for men and right big toe for women). These are

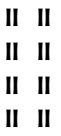
just nine of the sixteen points that are in harmony with the 10th century Indian Guru Gorakhnath's teachings,[2] where he points out the existence of sixteen containers of energies (points where a great amount of nerves are crossing) in the human body called *adharas*, an extension of the chakras. These sixteen containers of energy can copulate with each other and together they bring forth an array of 256 possibilities. This cosmic copulating takes place in all of nature and also man; thus man is indeed a cosmic talisman.

These 256 possibilities that are born from the sixteen bridges or 'vessels of power' are born from four fundamental principles which are life, death, transformation and rebirth. These vessels of power are called *Odu*, which means *womb* in an active, energetic and creative sense. It means that Odu brings forth both creation and absence. The first four odu bring forth the principal ideas of life/death/transformation/rebirth followed by an extension of these principles into the greater scope of evolution. These first eight odus represent the descent of *ase* or power from *orun* (the celestial) to the below while the next eight represent an inversion of the flow of *ase*. Here we find the manifestation of these ideas in culture and then in personal aspiration motivated by identification before finally returning to their source.

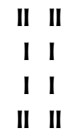
The cosmic pattern is based on 4 × 4 which brings forth sixteen. These sixteen are the pairs and these sixteen when interacting generate children, 16 × 16 gives 240 children and thus 256 patterns in all. The sixteen pairs or *Meji Odu* copulate and bring forth a greater array of possibilities that make up the entire cosmic fabric of possibilities. This is the secret the Ifá priest is initiating to learn and connect with. These patterns are marked by glyphs denoting absence and existence, inhalation and exhalation. Positive presence is marked by one line on the Ifá tray of divination and a double line marks the opposite. When principle X is absent and principle Y is present is different to when principle X is present and principle Y is absent. The balance is between present and not-present. This simple arithmetic of the multiplications of sixteen gives a great diversity of possible manifestations that reveals the cosmic secrets inherent in manifestation and its possibilities.

The sixteen pairs present the following creative ideas:

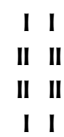
Ogbe Meji carries the idea of light and destiny. It is the road of possibility where we experience good as well as bad. It is the fullness of experience in all its fractions. It also carries the idea of patience and the need to live in harmony with nature. Its pitfall is arrogance and pride. Ogbe Meji brings to earth the essence of Good Character. Good Character is defined as a state of joyous contentment veiled in a calm and quiet disposition. It is the exhalation and the existence, the spark of fire that draws all to its light. It is the principle of light.



Oyeku Meji carries the spirit of the Mother of Death. It is the inhalation and the absence. It is the spirit of death, but it can never be death. If Ogbe is the fire igniting life in matter, Oyeku is anti-matter. She is the all encompassing darkness that signals the end of cycles and enters as good or bad phenomena depending on our situation. By being the end and darkness coming over our lives she can bring good tidings when we find ourselves in bad conditions – Oyeku announces an end of the existing condition. If your condition is one of depression and poverty Oyeku brings a radical change from this, an end to a negative cycle as much as it brings an end to what is good. In Oyeku we find the wheel of Fortuna that gives unexpected poverty as well as riches and is therefore dreaded by many as a messenger of death. Few people like change. It is the principle of darkness and night.



Iwori Meji presents us with the idea of transformation. It is intimately related to the idea of all things having consciousness – if you can name it, it is because it is. We also find here the powers that shape our unique identity and in this process we make good and bad choices – Life tempers us with the power of creation, fire. We can harden and mature or we can evaporate into a hot fog of nothingness. We can be a hero or the coyote roaming the camps at night. It is an odu speaking of choice as much as transformation. We find here fire and not light. It is a sign of passion, forging, conflict, growth, maturation. It is adolescence and birth. It is the principle of fire.



Odi Meji carries with it the idea of rebirth, of repeating

cycles. Odi Meji is the waters in all its forms, abysmal and celestial. It is the water of the womb and it is the new erected on rotten and barren structures. Odi Meji is the promise and the future and is erected on the basis of what is found in the three preceding odus. The promise of a future born from arrogance, despair and infantile inclinations is different from a future born of optimism, friendliness towards change and a fire directed towards passion for what is good. Odi meji is this energy, that lifts light, darkness and fire on the waves of water and onwards. It is properly the female genitalia and in particular the vaginal channel. It is the principle of water.

Irosun Meji is menstruation and purging. It brings a call to create your true destiny. Here we find several social problems, like resistance to advice, egotism and denial of one's ancestry. Irosun Meji tells us that we are all born good and blessed but with life we start to be tainted and are constantly in need of rejuvenation of spirit. The Odu emphasizes the importance of mothers and the female energy in the world, Irosun, the flowing redness of blood, of camwood, reminds us at all times that we had a most humble origin and that the menstrual blood could with ease expel us. Irosun is a call towards humility, of embracing life as a gift and using it to make your own and other people's lives better. It is the principle behind blood.

Owonrin Meji is said to be the principle of cosmic chaos, it is the moments when your world is turned upside down and it forces you to rethink your life, your world and what you believed to be true. In fact it is the power that brings order to a chaos that has been evolving slowly. In Owonrin we meet Esú and we are at the crossroads of dreaded choice. What brings the atmosphere of despair over Owonrin meji is that choice is neutral. We make choice in accordance with our destiny. When we do not know what is good for us and make choices we tend to dread the outcome. We do not know from where we came and we do not know where we are going – this is a proper way of describing the effects of Owonrin in our lives. Every time something cataclysmic that forces you to reconsider your life takes place Owonrin meji is occurring and this is the Odu that gives birth to the variety of manifestations of Esú in the world, the man at the Crossroad of the worlds; the molten magma showing itself in the night of decision. Owonrin is active darkness and gives a renewed outlook on life. It is the principle of perspective.

Obara Meji means strength, and strength is what is needed when cosmic transformation happens on a

personal level. Obara is the power of will – and this power can easily become abusive and oppressive. This Odu is traditionally given to Sango, the power of fire, when it manifests in kingship and questions a person's megalomania and superiority. Obara is a call to embracing destiny with good character and a reminder that man is inferior to nature, yet still is both part of it and can control it to a certain degree. Realizing that we are part of nature will induce humility before nature and our attention will be directed towards destiny and not towards temporary and selfish goals. In Obara rests the will to become the best you can be. It is the principle of determination.

Okanran Meji is the sadness arising from choices. It is the state of digestion of choices, of light, fire and darkness. When St. John of the Cross encountered the dark night of the soul he manifested the ecstasy of Okanran Meji. *Okan* in Yoruba means *heart* and *Okanran* means *what flows from the heart* – here we find all our passions and wrongdoings coupled with all good feats we have done. It is a sign that manifests knights and intuition. It is the obedience, through humility, of the prophetic trumpet. It signifies a moment in our life when we settle accounts with all things, good and bad and prepare ourselves for a personal rebirth more in tune with our destiny. It is the principle moving the heart.

Ogunda Meji is about victory, but it is victory arising from conquering yourself. It is the victory of fire upon metals announcing that it conquered the matter. Fire is the flame of spirit that changes what is solid and resistant and turns it into the strength and power of a worthy warrior. Ogunda is the power of light when it benefits the world and can reveal the path. It is an Odu speaking of the importance of hard work and of optimism. It is the Odu that manifests the power of Ogun, the master of Iron, the first blacksmith. It is the principle of power and force.

Osa Meji is the power behind natural cataclysms, tornadoes, hurricanes and volcanoes devastating land and people. *Osa* means *fly away* and this name is associated with birds. The collective force of birds stirs nature into disaster and at the same time the birds tend to fly away easily. It is an Odu speaking of the importance of being on the side of your force and not running away from challenges. Osa speaks of someone strong in faith, who knows what is right but needs to stay true to what is good. Hence in Osa we also find the manifestation of gossip and slander since Osa represents a power of wisdom in the world that one needs courage

to display. It is the principle of cowardice and courage.

Ika Meji is most interesting. This is the serpentine power and can be both deception and calmness. The idea of ase, power, is found here and this power is replicated in the tongue. Like the viper's tongue Ika Meji carries this dual force and can bless as much as it can curse. Ika challenges by questioning your integrity. Do you seek to crown the world with selfish denigration or with words of healing and protection? The powers of protection are naturally those powers that can also fling open our greatest weaknesses. It speaks of protection and responsibility. Protection in the hands of an irresponsible person turns into weakness. Interestingly the etymologically similar Kako (Roma/gypsy) word *ikka* also signifies a union of powers equal to what we find in Ika Meji. It is the principle behind all forms of hexing.

Oturupon Meji is the principle of disease and sickness. It gives sickness as much as it protects against it, depending on the stature and destiny of the one who manifests it. This is the Odu where ancestors and nature, through the lord of the Woods, Osanyin, speaks. The illness can be of the body, soul and the mind and it also gives the remedies to ward off illness. At the same time it possesses the knowledge of herbs and their qualities. It is an Odu that reveals the whole array of nature and her remedies, from healing to killing. It carries yet again the admonition of not growing arrogant, as this will tilt you off center and send you into the domains of dislocated self importance, cruelty and hubris. It is the whole array of illness and the principle of healing.

Otura Meji is the principle of divine communication. It is the mystic vision that brings light to the world. When the challenges of Oturupon are solved it will bring health and a clear vision of the road onwards. In Ifá it is said that the Muslims entered Yorubaland and brought both wisdom and conflict. Otura is about the conflict inherent in good things. It is the will of the heart towards providing light and new directions. It is the principle of prophecy and what makes connection with the source possible.

Irete Meji is the diamond generated by intense pressure,

lacking this pressure it will be only charcoal. Burnt out and useless, but still hardened by fire it can think it has a certain worth. Irete is the war cry, but its success is dependent on its accumulated power. If it is a diamond it will resist, if it is charcoal it will break. Irete manifests stubbornness and endurance. If this power is directed towards oneself it can bring dramatic and wonderful consequences. It is the principle of accumulating power.

Ose Meji manifests everything that is fragile in creation – and therefore abundance, being the most fragile of human blessings. Abundance is money, children, reputation, good health and all that is good in life. At the same time Ose reminds us of how fragile these blessings are and advises us to always hold on to what is good in our life by displaying a good, caring and generous character. This Odu manifests the Orisa Osun, spirit of abundance and the erotic. The erotic is seen here as a form of merging sweetness that multiplies in the world. It is the principal of abundance.

Ofun Meji is a most mysterious principle and is sometimes called the grandfather of the Odus. It is the principle of light un-manifested and thus Ogbe becomes its child. In a way we can say that this is the garden of Olodumare (God). When the prophetic light of Otura ascends it is often Ofun it encounters, as the source of miracles. Saddhus and sages manifest this Odu as vehicles for the divine mystery. In the same way Ofun generates a greater diversity which is visible in the diversity of Earth's population. Ofun brings the message of unity across diversity and is an indicator that where racism or sexism is present there is no trace of the miraculous light of Olodumare, but rather its absence. As such Ofun is the true source of what is commonly understood as magic, as Ofun provides the secrets of manipulation of matter prior to its manifestation. It is the principle of miracles.

When Ifá divination is made it is always important to take into consideration what the left hand and the right hand reveals. The meji found on the right side speaks of the situation that has come into manifestation and the meji on the left speaks of the powers that caused the present to become manifest. The left explains the right. In this way the diviner reveals what powers are moving the current situation into being and thus widen the field of understanding and solutions. Ifá is a faith rooted in the wisdom of the land itself moved by the consciousness of nature by honoring one's ancestors, both by blood and in spirit. The wisdom of the ancestors is given upon eternal and cosmic patterns but demands that we possess the consciousness and wisdom needed to understand the nature of the principle moving our lives. We can grasp this wisdom by being determined to restore

our consciousness to bring good things to our lives and through this allow the collective wisdom of our ancestry to speak forth from all the quarters of the world.

With immense gratitude to Baba Awo Falokun Fatumbi and the Baba's and Iya's of Awo Ogboni Funfun in Abeokuta, Nigeria for their generosity and wisdom.

ENDNOTES

1 In the cosmology of Ifá we find the Imole Èsú, Lord of the crossroads between dimensions who takes on several Mercurial characteristics. Èsú is known in the diaspora as Eshu, Eleggua and Exu – but this must be understood as an affirmation of his Mercurial quality and not as an identification with the Imole Èsú.

2 See Shri Trishulnath, *The Vajra Yama*. Chadezoad, 2007.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE JUJU

Mexican death cults. I love it, it sounds like the theme of a really good Robert Rodriguez film. Everything that happens in my imagination after that phrase is used plays out in tropical cities built in the style of continental Spain peopled by beautiful brujas and charming gun fighters. I think of knife blades flashing over bad deals and deep mahogany eyes telling me my future. Dogs lie panting in the streets of my mind. Everyone drives decrepit old pick-ups built five decades ago.

Catholicism was intended to unite the pagan religions of continental Europe, unite or consume, depending on your perspective. I consider the Catholic religion to be as syncretic as any spiritual system that evolved into a religious faith. A syncretic, monotheistic spiritual model can absorb the principles of any polytheistic model it might encounter without losing control of its centre. This is the mechanic which underlies the prevalence of Christianity, Islam and Buddhism in our modern era, which took root in pagan Europe, the pagan Middle East and in thoroughly polytheistic India respectively. Monotheistic spiritual models do not however fare so well when they come into contact with inherently shamanic or animist paradigms. We have to tip our hats here to Buddhism, for rolling with it. When Buddha met the Bon of Tibet he happily conceded to the animists that, yes, they were in fact quite right. Catholicism, Judaism and Islam have met animism with only unwavering hostility and proselytizing.

Unfortunately for the Middle East and Europe, they never really got the chance to run their monotheists out. In North America, Catholicism broke upon the dream of autonomy and individualism into a million fractious little sects with simply no hope of attaining to any sort of unity again. Reduced to a sort of monotheism turned pagan through its degeneration into a crowd of remarkably similar doppelgangers, Catholicism then had to endure the greatest affront known to monotheism. It had to share power and influence with a bunch of other religions from other places in the world and the superstitious animists it had stamped out in Europe during its rise to power.

The increasingly secular perspective of North America added insult to injury by adopting the Protestant (its great theosophical rival in Europe,) ethical model to underscore its process of civil justice and political influence. Cut off as it was from its traditional conduits of power, those of moral authority in political and social matters, the deeply solar nature of European cultures and the ability to subjugate its rivals through violence, Catholicism found itself at the mercy of the animists. Importing slaves through the vehicle of the European monarchy as it had done innumerable times in the past and honouring the Jesuit imperative to educate (which had earned it the favour of the crowns and conveniently allowed for the indoctrination of millions), the Catholic religious empire began entrenching into the America's in the early 1500s. Spreading a common language among the many disparate peoples brought to the Americas by the European monarchies

Ryan Valentine

in its efforts to indoctrinate not only the native population but also the itinerant workers. At the pinnacle of Christian dominance during its union with the Spanish Empire, it stretched throughout the greater part of Europe, all of the Americas to the Philippines.

The Spanish Kings were however embroiled in conflicts of their own with the other monarchies of Europe and with the Papacy itself for control of the Empire, many of those conflicts spanning generations. It was constantly at war with the Ottoman Empire for deeply ideological reasons and beset by piracy. The Papacy was largely responsible for Spanish control of the New World; the Jesuits arrived with the landing party and immediately set up shop. They trained isolated converts and commanded field units against the French and the Portuguese. They also became fabulously wealthy, the church itself was already fabulously wealthy of course, but the Jesuits in particular became enormously powerful. The whole thing reminds me of Burroughs and his lost boys, reminds me in a really literal sense. He has a sequence about an elite fighting unit of homosexual teenage boys assembled during the colony wars of this period in South America. I bet it was the Jesuits.

The European Papacy ultimately became displeased with the Jesuits, perhaps it offended its pride to be totally dependent on them for more gold, or perhaps it was because the Jesuits went native so often. Once Spain had lost control of Europe it sought to assure its independence through its holdings in the New World and the Papacy gave them that assurance, handing the greater control over the colonies to the Spanish aristocracy. In effect, taking control over the Jesuit holdings in much of the Americas. Everywhere the indigenous animism begins to creep back in, taking new and unexpected forms. No one in Europe could keep control of their neighbour long enough to seriously contain revolution in the colonies. Even the Papacy was fraught with internal conflict. Eventually, despite its best manoeuvrings the Papacy found itself alone, surrounded by rebels, sorcerers and heathens with no one to help carry its gold home. North America then sides with the Protestants, and the Catholic Empire is well and truly fucked. It's all downhill from there, as they say.

Left to their own devices, the Americas broke apart into varying sorts of government and social momentums all of which are distinctly not aristocratic. Democracies and Commonwealths and Socialist dictatorships, you name it, we tried it. The Spanish held out in South America, the French and the British in the North, each with their respective combinations of European philosophies and religious sentiments and prerequisite indentured workforce. Catholicism, bereft of heads of state under various Socialist regimes almost immediately descends into superstition and explodes into syncretic hybrids all throughout the Caribbean and Latin America, Palo Mayombe and Santeria being among some of the better known variants to arise from the South. In the North, the Protestant ethic explodes into secular humanism and the syncretic hybrids of Vodou and Hoodoo arise.

The secular North is only now beginning its long grappling match with the Catholic Church and the Christian variants it leaves behind here will most likely remain a tremendous cultural influence upon the Americas as a whole for some long time to come. The French necromancers believed that the Americas were under the governance of the Archduke Ashteroth and not one of the Demon-Kings. Often the solar nature of the Kings is misrepresented in contemporary occult

examination as being somehow 'more powerful' than the spirits of the lesser ranks.

I think it behooves us here in the contemporary West and more specifically here in the Americas to cast off this rather European and baroque idiosyncrasy. Kings, like the rest of the aristocracy, are subject to the whims of the populace. Perhaps some might argue, much more so. Popular uprisings have taken the lives of many an aristocrat to be sure, but I would wager that more Kings have been removed from their thrones than Dukes have been removed from their duchies. Yet here in the Americas where we are ruled over not by solar Kings, but rather by mercurial Presidents, we have yet to shift our focus to those ranks which best reflect the nature of power in the West. I must concede here of course, that a very strong solar current courses through contemporary Western culture but it no longer is a true reflection of how power is controlled, wielded or sought.

Traditionally, the Dukes are given to the movements of Venus by those necromancers who were so inclined to trace the activities of the daemon in relation to the movements of the heavens (an inclination not universally held by the poisoners of yester-year). This creates new and interesting dynamics within the social and political stratas and colours the games of power played by those with power to wield in a manner altogether different from the Kingdoms from whence we sought liberation. The popular uprisings of the last millennia ended the absolute authority of government over those governed. The tyranny of monarchies became cliché and regrettable throwbacks to a darker age in human civilization. The quality of life of the average citizen took priority over the opulence and dominance of the throne. Equality of sex, class and education became the bar by which a nation was measured. The great shadow war between capitalist democracy and communist socialism arose, both uniquely Venusian perspectives on governance. War became the province of soldiers and its overflow into the lives of the commoner regrettable to the point of criminal negligence. We battle now with corporate resources (the corporation is another uniquely Venusian concept), espionage and the backroom negotiations of diplomats. The honour of combat and the glory of sun-kings is now a romanticism which belongs to long ago.

One can no longer rise to power and control through hereditary birth right, these days you gots to seduce those bitches. Sing a little song, do a little dance, a slap and a tickle, promises of easier times, a bigger share of the pie and less of a load to carry. You got to deliver a bit more Venus into everyone's life. You don't get to sit in the big chair unless the populace puts you there.

We have to be careful couching the whole of the thing in such dualistic terms as *masculine* and *feminine* or we at least should aspire to the very fullest understandings of both. Crowley and his Point and Wave.

It can be difficult at first to envision Death as merciful but Christ taught that it was his death that should be celebrated and not his life, for it was through death that he liberated us and found liberation himself. To condense a multi-faceted theology, it was his death which represented the ultimate sacrifice. The sacrifice of a God liberated humanity from the penalties of sin. There is a lot of underlying dogma within both the Christian and Jewish cosmologies which terminate at this conclusion.

When I finished the *Work of Bad Jack*, Vanessa and I began a negotiation of a sort of lazy chaos. Much of our life just sort of vanished and fell away. We travelled to

Nu-England and Gamorrah and half dozen places in between. After the Whore came Perdition. After the red came the black and then the white. After Babalon, Santa Muerte. Christ bleeds out, eventually everything does and then there is only Death. Abaddon opens the way. Revering this principle is honouring Santa Muerte, for they are one and the same. It is in this manner that she differs from her sister, Santa Birgitta, who honours the principle of suffering and to whom one prays for Indulgence.

Santa Birgitta figures dominantly in a much older magical syncretism which focuses on the Passion of Christ. *The Revelations of Santa Birgitta* are primarily focused on the relationship of Birgitta to Christ (as his Bride) and to the Blessed Virgin (the personified grace of God). The dominant themes are those of evil existing as a necessity alongside good, the destruction of degenerate Christians and the rapture of the Holy Spirit. Her 15 prayers became common liturgy among the Catholics and took on an occult dimension as they became synonymous with the miraculous. Said to grant the supplicant everything up to their hearts desire and supernatural graces, the church disallowed distribution of the prayer books which contained references to the 21 Indulgences in the mid-fifties.

The parables within Santa Birgitta's *Revelations* also contributed in their way to her adoption into the syncretic creoles of the early America's. Several times Birgitta is educated in a particular mystery by both Christ in the form of the Lord of Glory (the form taken after the crucifixion, wherein Jesus Christ becomes the King of Heaven, or King of Kings, which is a title of Legba) and the Devil. Parables that seek to illustrate the necessity of both good and evil in shaping the lives of humanity. Stories like Old Glory and the Devil at the crossroads making their pitch or selling your soul to the Devil (disguised as a sorcerer) and him getting the better of the bargain, on several occasions the Devil is called upon to testify on behalf of Old Glory and the righteousness of his love for Birgitta.

There are an interesting number of digressions within the text itself. *The Book of Knights* preoccupies itself with the proper and improper behaviour of Knights (there is an amusing parable wherein the Devil seduces his Lady in the guise of one of her Knights) and how they are to be properly Ordained, frequent scathing indictments of degenerate Christians and of course the complete and absolute ecstasy she experiences in Old Glory's presence.

Interestingly, there was another Saint of the same name who was extremely popular among the British Isles where popular opinion holds she was syncretized with the pagan figure of Brigid through the vehicle of Brigid of Kildare. Brigid of Kildare lived several hundred years before Birgitta of Sweden, and is celebrated on a different day. Brigid of Kildare is honored on Imbolc (February 1–2) the pagan festival dedicated to spring and the pagan Goddess who was her namesake, whereas Birgitta of Sweden is honored on July 23. Popular folklore holds that she was the daughter of a pagan chieftain and Priestess of Brigid who was converted to Catholicism by Saint Patrick whom she stood alongside as Patron Saint of Ireland.

The popularity of the *Prayers and Revelations of Santa Birgitta* among the Irish and Scottish Catholics is well documented, they were printed in a primer by William Caxton who operated the first English printing press and were often included in the Books of Hours distributed in the late Middle Ages all throughout Europe. The Books of Hours were small devotional books con-

taining the calendar of Catholic Feast days, portions of the Gospels, litany of the saints, devotional Psalms and the *Offices of the Dead and of the Blessed Virgin*. The *Prayers of Santa Birgitta* and the *Offices of the Dead* are both offered up on February 1 and 2.

Birgitta came ultimately to rest with the Gede as their Maman, alongside Baron Samedi as the principle dichotomy which heads the family of Lwa. The Gede are what are generally termed a New World family, alongside the Petro. New families arising out of the pressures and circumstances of the New World. She is a notable absence in Maya Deren's accounts of her travels through Haiti, which culminated in her being ridden by Erzulie Freda on multiple occasions, though she is listed among the glossaries.

In truth most of the iconography associated to the Gede and les Barons is distinctly and baroquely Catholic, crosses and coffins and crucifixes. This aspect of the New World families is largely glossed over in scholarly work as camouflage or clumsy misassociation, but these arguments don't really stand careful examination. Even the Petro rites contain the litanies to the saints and this of itself negates the argument that the Catholic contribution was purely for camouflage. The Petro were always nakedly aggressive towards their opponents, sometimes towards themselves or just creation in general. These are Lwa who were nursed to life away from the prying eye of the French and Spanish for the express purpose of kicking their asses.

Interestingly, up until the 50s the Dantors and the Petro were still widely regarded as distinct families. It is of note that a mambo named Marinette (the notorious Petro Lwa of the same name is said to be her Gros Bon Ange) inaugurated the Haitian rebellion by sacrificing a black pig for Erzulie Dantor. These days, more than 200 years later, Erzuli Dantor is commonly revered as the mother of the Petro, as are Ti-Jean and others of what was traditionally the Dantor family. Both families were brought violently to war against the Catholic empire. It is the only successful slave rebellion and marked a pivotal victory over the practice of slavery and imperialism in the Americas. One can only imagine how this struggle would have entwined the two families.

The Burr Alexander paper transcribed into the appendices of Maya Deren's *Divine Horsemen* makes a compelling argument for a Central American influence in both the Petro family and the Dantor, as well as the more widely documented Congo. The French colonialists themselves documented their difficulties with prisoners taken from the Congo and the Spanish had been shipping the troublesome Aztecs to Haiti for more than a hundred years before it came under French dominion. Quoting the similarities between traditional descriptions of Ti-Jean and Tezcatlipoca, the paper also highlights a tremendous number of ideological similarities between the African and Central American spiritual world views. Following the revolution, the primary female component of the Petro was traditionally the Lwa Marinette herself, often known by the epithets *Brittle* or *Skeletal* and is described in terms synonymous with those used to describe Itzpapalotl, the dark goddess who was the traditional consort of Tezcatlipoca and who was worshipped long enough after the arrival of the Spanish to occasionally be called the Lady of the Court. Milo Rigaud completely ignores these correspondences in his attempt to trace the entirety of the Lwa back to Africa, though his research is nonetheless exhaustive and illuminating.

The Creole which developed among the indentured

workforce was a Spanish-French hybrid liberally peppered with native (both African and Central American dialects) terminology, collected around something almost resembling a classic Latin grammar. This ontology would seem to highlight the role of the Jesuits in the gentrification of the dispossessed and the catholic prerogative for conversion. Conversely, the role of the Prêt Savanne (Hedge Priest) in the ceremonies of the Vodoun would seem a testament to the Jesuits prerogative for going native. Profoundly, all Haitian services to the Lwa whether Petro or Rada, Guede or Zombi, begin with a salutation to Legba, then the Catholic Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Ghost) and the Vodoun Trinity (Les Mystères, les Morts et les Marrassa) are saluted, followed by a salute to those honoured present (the Houngan and the others of the Peristyle's Society along with its patron Lwa), this is followed by the litanies and the *action de grâce* and the invitations to the individual Lwa. The Catholic components of traditional Haitian Vodoun are fully integrated and harmonious with its cosmology and this is most noticeable in the New World families of the Petro and Gede.

Haiti itself has a history of insurrection, the port of Tortuga was a haven for pirates and exiles right up until the 18th century when the French took official possession of what is currently Haiti from the Spanish, allowing hundreds of years for the blending of the many disparate ideologies and mythologies and literally tens of thousands of native Central American slaves to make their contribution to it.

The French passed the Code Noir in the late 1600s which required all French slave owners to convert their slaves to Roman Catholicism and made the practice of any other religion illegal. The Ursuline Nuns who were extremely influential in Louisiana, were specially educated to handle the conversion of house slaves. The Ursuline had a long history going back to 1544, two of their number and a Jesuit priest arriving in modern day Canada in 1631, 1727 they were formally established in New Orleans.

The Ursuline are of some interest to the occult scholar, contributing the grand devils Verrine and Sonneillon to the grimoire tradition and popularized such renowned figures as Asmodeus (a pact he stole from the devil's cabinet himself was used in one particular court case involving the Ursuline Sisterhood as evidence), Ashteroth and Behemoth. Alongside the Jesuit, they became known colloquially as *God's Marines*, expert in the art of exorcism and recognizing the qualities and nature of demonic possession.

The Code Noir is thought to have been drawn up in part due to the practice among the colonial French and Spanish of *plaçage*, as well as a response to the frequent slave rebellions. Plaçage was a sort of extra-legal common-law marriage between a free man and a slave concubine or freed-person-of-color, unrecognized by the Church. According to the Code, if one of these women was to bear children both she and the child would have to be freed and the woman married if the free man was unattached. The French especially invested in the concept of plaçage and it was a popular practice in both Louisiana as well as Haiti. The resultant mulatto population occupied a strange liminal space declared 'freed people of color' who nonetheless had no political or social influence beyond their own community. Historians recount how the French in Haiti had a precedent for so carefully choosing their placée's that the resulting mulatto population became famous for their beauty, called by the Haitians *Les Sirènes*. It is of some note here that following the defeat of France it was those

of this particular class who remained, that filled the power vacuum left in the wake of the Haitian rebellion.

One can but wonder what the pressure upon the Ursuline Sisters would have been like. The Ursulines were traditionally cloistered, an absolute isolation from the world and the affairs of men. Yet it was to this group the responsibility fell for grooming the daughters of the placée's in Catholicism, French or Spanish (sometimes both), and European etiquette. The Ursuline Order groomed les Sirènes, the most infamous collection of courtesans since the hetaera of ancient Greece. Let's just think about that for a second.

While contemporary history has a tendency to gloss over the courtesans which arose from Plaçage due to their morally ambiguous nature some of these women still retain their positions of legend, often aggrandized to the point fiction, as in the case of Marie Laveau. At the time of the abolition of slavery in the US, the liminal community of freed-persons-of-color in New Orleans was more than two-thirds women, the most prominent of which headed the free households. It was from this matrilineal line that the Voodoo Queens of New Orleans arose to their position of social dominance.

The history of the Ursuline convents reads like a fantasy porn novel. Where most of the demonic possession cases in the 1600–1700s turned around witchcraft in the forms of abortion, herbalism and observation of pagan religious rites the Ursuline were called to witness in cases of clerical necromancy and demonology. In both the Loudun and Aix-en-Provence cases, an Ursuline convent becomes infested with devils and the sisterhood descends into orgies of sexual excess.

In the Loudun incident Urbain Grandier, a parish priest, figures prominently in the sexual excess of the nuns, appearing to them at night in the form of an angel and inciting them to debauchery. The Mother Superior, Jeanne des Anges eventually calls for an exorcism of the convent when the cries of orgasmic joy of other nuns in the convent caused her to realize that she was not the only one suffering demonic assault. Grandier was apparently a handsome and wealthy man, with several lovers including the daughter of the King's solicitor.

A pact written in human blood between Grandier and the devil Asmodeus was produced during the trial containing the names of the demons which had assaulted the nuns. Curiously, modern analysis has identified the hand of Jeanne des Ange as that of the author of that now infamous pact.

Twenty years earlier in Aix-en-Provence, a Father Gaufridi is eventually executed on charges of diabolism and necromancy. Four sisters displayed similar signs of possession as those later witnessed in the Loudun case. All attempts to exorcize them at first failed, eliciting only accusations from the devils damning Gaufridi, particularly a Sister la Palud. Though Gaufridi is eventually found guilty la Palud never gives up the craft and eventually renounces God and her vows and even the prayers offered on her behalf. Another of those sisters, one Louise Capeau (the most violently possessed) is reputed to have died still in a state of demonic possession.

Two years before the trials in Aix, an Ursuline Sister – Marie de Sains – was held responsible for the bewitching and seduction of three nuns in Lille. Her court testimony, in which she admits diabolism reads as an almost exact duplicate of la Palud's renunciation. In every case involving the Ursulines the possessions are poignantly sexual. Though attempts to exorcize

Louise Capeau were met only with violent and hideous contortions of her body and verbal assaults upon the exorcist she lived the rest of her life in a state of extreme sexual arousal. In both Aix and Loudun the Ursulines themselves seem at least complicit in the diabolism, to the pragmatic perhaps solely responsible. Oh, to have been a fly on that wall.

It is difficult to overlook the pact written in Jeanne des Ange's hand naming her convent and the dashing Grandier as the objects of Asmodeus' sexual attentions as well as the renunciations of Capeau and la Palud when the attempt was made to separate them from their demonic lovers, when considering the role this Order played in shaping the Voodoo Queens of New Orleans and Les Sirènes of Haiti. Both the Queens and les Sirènes showed a marked bias towards French-European sensibilities elevating them above those of the slaves and considered themselves an extension of the French aristocracy. Both the French and Spanish sent the daughters of their placée's to Europe for their education and so in some ways the Christian influence is represented in an entirely different light. Where the Jesuit was alone among the devil-worshipping heathens of the wild and untamed Americas, the courtesan was alone among the Ursuline demon-nuns of aristocratic Europe.

It is a well-documented fact that an impressive number of les Sirènes fled Haiti to Louisiana and New Orleans and one wonders if the distinctions between Haitian and Louisiana Vodou arose partially from this development. Slavery persisted longer in America than it did in Continental Europe; the loss of Haiti was a tremendous blow to the French. The sugar plantations there were keeping France afloat, and the loss of a colony to the slaves sent shockwaves through European culture. Though the use of slaves was largely outlawed in Europe by the mid 1700s it continued as common practice in the colonies into the 1800s.

The USA was at this time highly sympathetic to the French (who had only just won their independence from the French monarchy) and counted them among their primary allies. Washington did everything in his power to assist the French in their attempt to suppress the rebellion. Ultimately, the rebellion defeated the French, Dutch and Spanish Armies and so Washington banned all trade with the new born Haiti and even attempted to sell a portion of the Louisiana Purchase back to France. Strict information restrictions were sanctioned for fear the U.S. slave population might follow the lead set by Haiti.

In 1790, the year of the French Revolution, free persons of color (les Sirènes) in French Santa Domingo owned 10% of the island's slaves and land.

The exiles from Haiti and Louisiana's own liminal community of free persons of colour undoubtedly would have had contact with the Vodou of the Caribbean. Quite possibly the best known placée in American history was the Vodou Queen Marie Laveau. Though there is some argument among contemporary practitioners of what is known conventionally as *the Faith* among the Vodou practitioners of Louisiana as to the degree to which Ms. Laveau is evocative of the traditional Mambo Queen.

American Vodou is distinctive from its Haitian counterpart in a number of interesting ways, most of which are highly evocative of the practice of plaçage and the long period of segregation of Africans and Latin Americans in the USA. Secrecy is emphasized and its ritual lacks the celebratory character of the Haitian services. This alone makes a deeper comparison of

the two extensions difficult. The disciplines and rituals like everything else, were passed down as a hereditary birth right along the matrilineal line. The plaçées groomed their daughters for positions of dominance within their communities.

While all of this romance was happening in the Americas, Europe itself was experiencing something of a magical revival. Generally known as the witch-craze, the colonial era saw a return of the occultist in the form of clerical and heretical necromancers. It was these largely anonymous practitioners which were the foundation of what is known today as the grimoire tradition. Until the 70s these books were for the most part considered to be either repositories of superstitious nonsense or conversely, magical formulae so black and dangerous that only the suicidal would engage with them.

The tradition begins very early, 1300s probably even earlier, as collections of Latin verse organized into a ritual book centred around rites of exorcism and the devils whom the individual had dealt with. Most of the demonic hierarchies have their roots in this period. The CLM 849 is 13th century German and almost explicitly in Latin verse with the exception of a conjuration which is written in Aramaic. Although the CLM 849 is obviously a compilation, the hand of the unknown author is vividly felt. There is a deep regard for Aramaic although the conjuration itself is so badly garbled it is obvious that the author didn't speak the language. There are several variations of the primary exorcism and a few of the other more practical applications laid out in the work and a process of refinement becomes palpable as we look deeper into the work itself. The CLM 849 is distinct from later collections like Solomon's Keys or other better known texts from that era in that it preoccupies itself with biblical liturgy and the difference shown to Aramaic (the language of Christ) which has already been mentioned. There are literally no astrological correspondences and the demonic hierarchy is more of a suggestion within the text than a reality. The whole of the work is predicated on the realization that if the Catholic exorcism can be used to call the devil out of a person, it can be used to call the devil out of anything. There are no sigillum and no demonic ranks, all conjuration is done through a liturgical vehicle occasionally with the aid of consecration. The handful of seals within the text serve to instruct the operator in the manner of these consecrations, the names (either sacred or profane) or Latin verses to be said while the circle is walked and the Stations of the Cross are marked to consecrate the space. The habit of drawing out elaborate circles decorated with sigillum and god-names is a later development which most likely arose out of a misunderstanding of the purpose of these illustrations in earlier texts like the CLM 849.

To lend weight to that assertion, illustrations in church documents and other texts of witches and necromancers doing their thing also illustrate this development. The earliest illustrate these evil men and women consorting (either playfully or hard at work at some diabolism) in intimate sometimes even friendly ways, then later illustrations of necromancers commanding some unclean spirit from within a crude circle he has traced upon the ground and then still later individuals astride elaborately complex mandalas. Something of note here is how the early heretical clerics were most usually displayed going about the business of their magic in the exact same manner as the heathen witches, utilizing their liturgical knowledge to augment the organic ritual structure of traditional

witchcraft in much the same way that the Prêt Savanne does within the rituals of Vodoun.

Thirteenth century Europe saw the introduction of several occult sources from the near-east as well, like the Aramaic *Sefer Razial ha-Malakh* and the astral magic treatise known as *Picatrix*. The word grimoire comes from *grammaire*, originally an Old French term for any text written in Latin and later a French colloquialism referencing anything that was impossible to understand. It is fairly well established that up until the early modern period this tradition was kept alive almost exclusively by the clerical and religious establishment and the early texts demonstrate this explicitly.

The Early Modern period saw an explosion of related texts and was the true beginning of the revival of sorcery in Europe. Texts compiled by practitioners such as Agrippa, Della Porta, Weyer, Dee and Kelley all originate during this period. It was during this time that true and elaborate hierarchies began to appear, citing roles and ranks for their respective demonic constituents and attempts at integrating practical astrology and correspondences.

Generally, this is seen as an inevitable by-product of the advent of the printing press but I think this perhaps too casually disregards the degree of exposure to pagan and animist societies through rapidly expanding trade, Catholic missionaries and the impact of technological superiority on colonial activities. It was during this period that the colonization of the Americas began and with it the use of slavery as a means to colonization. Grimoires such as the *Grimorium Verum* originate in this era and it shares an entire spiritual hierarchy out of the South American religious system known as Quimbanda. The *Key of Solomon* contains the vevers for many of the Lwa of Haitian Vodou.

By the 1800s several of these books had become widespread and popular in the Americas, notably *Verum*, the *Books of Moses* and *St. Cyprian*. Many of them found their way into the folk-magic traditions which grew up out of the strange conditions of the early Americas. There is a real reluctance among current practitioners to address some of the questions these two disparate traditions raise. Among the folk-magic practitioners most of the ritual and talismanic affectations of the grimoires were dispensed with and replaced with the more organic ritual practices common to the African, Mexican and South American cultures in a fusion which is greatly evocative of the very early records of necromancy and witchcraft in Europe. They found that if instead of commanding the spirits with the righteous names of the one god and master from within your fortress of solitude, one did honour and sacrifice on behalf of their spiritual allies they got considerably better results (i.e., they kicked the French out of Haiti).

It becomes increasingly difficult to disregard the level of exposure the Catholic establishment and the European aristocracy had with the Creole spiritualities of the Americas. That the European would couch that exposure in baroque Christianity is not really a surprise. Both Weyer and Agrippa regarded witchcraft as a degenerate art; Weyer is well known for his stand against the execution of witches, but it is less widely known that this perspective was based on his belief that they were all mentally ill.

For the Continental of this period the parish priest was the intermediary with the invisible, the doctor was the answer to the issues of the flesh. The Enlightenment turned only cast evil looks upon the organic spiritualities of the pagan cultures it encountered. Alchemy and Astrology came to dominate Continental thought

and though both perspectives would have been invariably drawn to the pagan faiths of their slave classes and the creoles of the free Americas, neither of those meta-physical disciplines are inherently equipped to supplant the rest of the individual's social identity. Regarding the whole of the thing from this perspective, the grimoires seem to have the exact shape and flavour one might expect from the psychological environment and philosophical perspective they arose from.

All of this is not to suggest that none of the old European paganism made its way into the grimoires, just very little of it. A small portion of the devils of the grimoires are recognizable, primarily those which the Church encountered in North Africa and those with biblical sources. Beyond the presence of Lamia in de Plancy's *Dictionaire Infernale* (which is a very late addition to the grimoires) there are few remarkable showings from the pagan European cultures, though I feel it most likely that several of the infernal spirits have European origins.

It may be of note here to the reader that John Dee, writing in the late 1500s remarked in his journals that he had to turn to the angels themselves because the Catholic Church had been remarkably successful in its destruction and appropriation of all aspects of European paganism and that information regarding their Gnostic disciplines was virtually impossible to obtain. I say this is of note because Dee did not live under the control of the Catholic Empires yet lamented privately in regards to this point.

By the 1800s Western ceremonialism, heavily influenced by Qaballah and Rosicrucian thought, had become very nearly completely divorced from its cousins in the Americas. The belief that all practical juju was inherently evil was widespread and the insensible doctrines of 'high' and 'low' magic was almost uniformly parroted in European circles. This lead to paradigms increasingly divorced from the physical world and the needs and desires of the flesh. The sex and death inherent in the symbolism of the creoles would have undoubtedly offended the protestant perspectives of the literate classes in both Europe and the Americas and this too most likely contributed to the division between the European occultists and their counterparts in the Americas.

The secrecy with which the Voodoo Queens practiced their Arte is a testimony to the fragility of their relationship with the rest of their social environment and the privileged classes that sustained it. Hoodoo was everywhere but its actual workings remained largely hidden from observation behind the glamour of its practical results. In this fashion the Queens negotiated a position of meaningful security in a decidedly hostile environment but this was a security built out of isolation and segregation.

Paschal Beverly Randolph stands as an excellent example of this tortured relationship. Throughout the mid-1800s Randolph, a freeman of mixed heritage, travelled the world after the death of his mother (a woman of the liminal class of freed-persons-of-color) and the subsequent estrangement from his father, who was a Virginian tobacco tycoon and descendant of the British aristocracy. His mother was notoriously beautiful and almost undoubtedly the daughter of a placée, though she herself would not have been protected under the Code Noir because the Randolph family were old school Episcopalians. Nonetheless, PB Randolph was obviously educated and had it as well, or better, than most of the liminal freemen of mixed heritage during his youth. At sixteen, a ripe old age for a young

man of any class in the 1800s, Randolph became a sailor and travelled extensively. Though not inherently religious he is remembered as a pious Christian and a Grand Master of the Rosicrucian Mysteries. Through his association with the Rosicrucian Brotherhood he was placed into contact with a pair of doctors in New York for whom he worked for several years as a medical intuitive and studied medicine. He became an intimate of Napoleon III, the Russian Emperor and sat as one of the Council of Three with General Hitchcock and Abraham Lincoln. (At the time I believe the Rosicrucian Brotherhood was massively influential with members of the aristocracy in powerful nations around the world.)

Randolph was a man of obvious conflicts. Though a vociferous Abolitionist, he also quite obviously resented his African blood and the limitations it placed upon him. Though his work was obviously heavily influenced by the hoodoo widely practiced at this time he took great pains to distance himself from 'the negro' as often as possible and denied his heritage whenever he could get away with it. In his work *Seership* he laments: *the negro's tendency towards barbarity when left to their own device*. It is however, difficult to tell how much of his perspective was framed in the philosophies of the times out of necessity, and how much out of genuine prejudice. He routinely condemns the hoodoo-men and hoodoo-women peddling their occult knowledge but offers primarily the same services under the auspices of the scientific method and Christian piety, services including finding suitable lovers, winning back a lover, the use of money/luck/love drawing talismans (under the auspices of the scientific properties of magnetic lode-stones) and his reputedly astounding oracular abilities. One did not have to work terribly hard in the 1800s to be called a doctor and science wore its innocence on its sleeve.

Love and sex became the crux of Randolph's work. His close friends and contemporaries Eliphas Lévi and Edward Bulwer-Lytton remained in communication with him his entire life and many argue that his philosophies regarding mysticism and sexuality represent the core teachings of the OTO through a direct line of transmission.

Regardless of Randolph's documented condemnation of Voodoo and the black magics of the Congolese, he never goes so far as to demean their effectiveness. To the contrary he repeatedly states that they are nearly always successful in some varying degree. He also claims several traditional mojo-bags (also *gris-gris*, *paquets*) for his own, under the auspices of his 'scientific' principles. When he really shines is when he is talking about the discipline of oracular vision, Randolph was obviously a tremendously talented seer. His record *Seership* is possibly the most concise and lucid overview of the discipline of scrying available to the contemporary student.

I believe that Randolph was deeply and authentically disturbed by the tendency of the Congolese to revert back to their native spiritual practices instead of embracing American Christianity. Though he was obviously deeply affected by other religious systems he remained firmly rooted in monotheistic models and could not seem to equate the animist and pagan faiths of Africa and the Congolese with anything except barbarity and the difficulties his mixed heritage had created in his own life. For all of the difficulties this might provide the contemporary student it did nothing but endear him to the philosophical establishment of his day. Everyone except Blavatsky, who was apoplectic

with outrage at the notion of a black man being capable of invigorating the Christian Mysteries, as well as the idea of having sex with an actual person.

Regardless of what else one sees in Randolph, he was a compelling, innovative and romantic man who revolutionized spiritual thought in both Europe and North America, shaped civil, political and medical thought and somehow dropped right out of the collective remembrance promptly after his death. His pragmatic approach to the esoteric, so evocative of the Hoodoo of North America and overflowing with its simple refinements of the ritual process simply disappears into the elaborate extensions of the OTO and Western ceremonial traditions.

By the early 1900s he seems to have disappeared from the esoteric record altogether. John Whiteside Parsons and Charles Stansfield Jones, the two most influential North American practitioners to follow Crowley, make no mention of him or his work. This is surprising, especially in the case of Jones, who wrote extensively on the subject of scrying himself, and also given the importance of Randolph to both Lévi and Bulwer-Lytton.

Western ceremonialists seem to have simply collectively forgotten the creoles of the Americas after the late 1800s. The compelling figures of the 1900s skip past it altogether and we are left with little but the misconceptions that belong to a time two centuries removed from us. One has the sense though that this simply must change. The growing significance of the atavism Santa Muerte and the diaspora of the Vodoun which must follow the tragedies in Haiti all place an increasing emphasis on the evolution of the juju in the Americas, where it has grown into a dynamic and living tradition and routinely changes the lives and circumstances of millions.

ILLUSTRATION:
Brigitte by Doug Nox.

QVEEN OF FIRE AND FLESH

INVOCATIONS OF POMBA GIRA · ANGELA EDWARDS

INVOCATION OF POMBA GIRA DAS SETE ENCRUZILHADAS

Queen of hell, I am to become also in my explorations designated queen of the earth
In the streets the alleyways I find my crown, to your royal kingdom
I have become whole your melodic erotic whispers come sit upon my throne
Of life's disrupted solace wear my crown
The kingdom's conquest is for poverty's taking alone to find beauty in everything
For in the darkness I have become within her union the brightest light
Light and dark formed dualist aspects of the same thing be molded unions aspects
Come take my kingdom in exploration of tainted everything tasted
Exotic disgorgement invoked
Universal sacred blasphemous bloodied prayer falling from full lips to speak in her tongues
Tongues possessed to find tenderness love in the lowly
Cemetery awakening crossed in forceful strength
Of Ogum's sculpted stones insatiability carved
To find beauty in all existence are my inheritance rich open spread legged secrecy
Climactic breathless gasps honoured upon the world confessional box invoked
All soiled eruptive lost children invoked lay by my feet to know you commit no sin
Mary Magdalene perfumed rosed sweetness falling in unfurled silken hair her spell
I will wash away guilt, there is no sin in my embrace of forgiveness saviour undenied
Where in the aspect of love only resides her redemption fulfilled
Corrupted gleaming majestic passion freedoms fired beauty consumed
In restlessness you will find final peace, in everything my sonnet invoked
In cigarette smoke entailed savaged hot sucked through her breath into me
I submit to life, I submit to death for in this I am in truth my instinct
Red, black enflamed temptresses restlessness invoked

Desires night sheeted intoxicated swallowed, humble powerlessness spoke
Blinded ribbon tied non conformist freedom handfasted upon Lucifer's bridal chambers lie
Cunning is the craft in trades mastered hustlers tricksters dispossessed known bride
I am the rose velvet sunken clitoral lust pentrated, sweetness light
I am the spiked thorns entered into flesh surrendered
Image the illusion of glamour projected desituted manipulation
Projection of wonderful vileness gagged sweetness provoked
Truth, good, evil cannot withstand beyond profane restricted human madness
All aspects of being are but one freedom's annihilation
Mortality, spiritual angelic daemonic universal space rode
I am the kiss of honey figged gentleness upon the lips in every lover's caress
I am the murderer knifes submission to the skin
Torn open in bloody unstained weeped flowing pained life
Splashed darken rouge reflected upon luna glowed skin through to light
To be love to the faithful, revenge ravaged to the unfaithful
To never forget in beauties fire acknowledged
Danger knows only human bounds, like death is a reflection
Solely in human inadequacies, my daggered epiphany acknowledged provocation alone
All victims of the streetlights effused victors in filth jewel riched faceted diamonds invoked
For in my ascension of the soul to find within powerlessness, empowerment consumed
Ignited in all unholy wars lays the explicit triumph to upon the crossroads arose
The legacy trails the gutter alleyways where saintly is but all burdened souls
My missions return regressed back to humanity's original soul to all sins overthrown
Clutched in my human stillborn children slums residence COME TO ME
For I hold no judgment children for the streets that are constructed in hell's fury
Are for our taking in conquest our impassioned heavens to dwell.
Pomba Gira das Sete Encruzilhadas!

THE DREAM

To sacrifice the black cock, sharpened knife slit throat
Upon smeared rosed lips rosebudded
To drink in glistened bloody intoxication life
Screech in meduimistic broken through tongues
His head is the chalice intoxication fire consumated
Black plumes writhing death union purified by seeping blood
Children know no fear of death, moralistic judgments inflicted human boundaries
Children in innocence fear no death, they know only truth reflected in our now
All children are her natural protected heirs, us in her enlightened translation invoked
Therefore in all these things they're reconstructed in her brazen image
Is the universe limitless
Where the black cock resides
Black tethered feathers draped hung curved black hearted pleasure entwined
In all to find truth and faith untainted
Blood drips on the grey concrete, my lover's infused victory
My vision tasted symbolism the cross in the shell of life invoked
I lay in my redemption life that is the grave deepened everything
In visions I lay within a cross blood outlined shallow grave
Paupers humble consecration to cut, revered by the knife
Seven crosses upon the breasts, upon the womb upon the sex symbolic pain transgressed
My body weeps sacred, inserted unrestricted passions BLISS
She mounts enters me shed split skin in witch's prophetic submission
My flesh cut is the bible, my flesh crossed spoken, tasted is her word
Martyred opened sacrifice I submit to abrasive life taken,
The ritual possessed then therefore to HER
Visions shocked through life to death I see
Seven levitated crosses outlined with blood we upon hang in knifed stigmata
Seven corpses hung flesh ripped meat exposed naked humanity revealed
Nightmares to become my sweet dreams of unflinching feeling provoked
I hear within this a tranquil comforting melody the lullaby her
To arise, resurrection trails, where I am on the streets, the alleyways
In the gutter filths holy heaven our material world invoked
For I live at the entry to the redlighted street, where upon the desituted find solace

In my guardian angel's empathic arms to nurture the lowly
That like children also know fear of life constructed in daggered death broken through
We I lay at the crossbones, in a blood outlined cross shallow grave
The blood runs in sweetness, bitterness I close my eyes entranced vision
Crimson velvet rich bloodied plushness covers me
As I sink into her bitter sour loving embrace
Pomba Gira das Sete Encruzilhadas!

THE RITUAL

I take my blade, where I whisper her name consecrated at the crossroads
In morality tarnished alleyways abode
I cut my flesh seven crosses upon the body I whisper her name
Blood seeped through upon her ponto
My body consecrated to become reborn her living talisman
Seven black candles, seven red lit the street is on my knees the only church
Inserted black pigeon plumes into flesh
The blood has become the ink,
The alleyway her parchement
The living word that is the flesh, the blood
In elemental heaven of the living now to reside
Pomba Gira das Sete Encruzilhadas!

GOETIC INITIATION

The room was filled with the fragrant smoke of cigars and the air reverberated with the sound of beating drums that could be felt deep in your core. The voices of multitudes singing together filled the small dimly-lit chamber; chanting melodious and eerie songs that called to the spirits and gave them life. Candles lit haphazardly on various surfaces high up and on the ground illuminated whirling patterns and symbols that snaked all across the floor. Devotees swayed to the mesmerizing sound of the music as the songs grew more in power reaching a fevered pitch. Just as they were reaching a peak seeming to shatter the tense air, it happened. The young devotee who had been quietly swaying to the sound of music in the center of the room, who had nervously kept his eyes cast down convulsed violently. He was being mounted by a spirit. His limbs shook and his eyes rolled back in his head as he let out unearthly howls and growls that sent shivers down the spine of the other people in the room. His body contorted and twisted in impossible ways as the spirit began to ride the human mount. Soon he peered around the room, but it was no longer his eyes that saw, for his body had become a vessel for a spirit. A god had come down to join the initiation.

The events above are not unfamiliar to the initiates and the followers of the African Traditional Religions – a collection of spirit-religions and mystery cults that have sprung from the African Diaspora as a result of African spirituality mingling with the New World culture of North and South America. Yet, to the followers of Western Occultism who are used to the formulaic and exact rituals and rites of the grimoires done in pristine temples and fancy robes, the entire thing seems exotic and quite messy. And yet there is more in common between the two traditions than what first meets the eye. It can be argued that these two worlds actually spring from similar if not identical impulses and that initiation, though different in form, features prominently for both. In fact, if one were to change a few details of the above vignette, you would be looking at a rite that would bear striking resemblance to the initiations of the mystery cults of the Mediterranean world – cults that share a powerful connection with the greater field of goetia.

While today goetia is often viewed as a type of magical work dealing specifically with demons and their evocation, it is actually quite a vast field in the ancient Mediterranean world. The *goes*, or sorcerer was deeply tied to the *magos* (mage), *psychagogia* (evocator), and to the Orphic initiations in Hellenic culture. This connection is found in the works of Diodorus who mentions the Idæan Dactyls and who says of them: *that they were sorcerers* [*goetes*]*, that they practiced incantations* [*epoidai*] *and initiation-rites and mysteries.* In this way the goes was not just a spell-caster but one deeply tied to mystery religions, initiation-rites, and magic. The nature of the mysteries that they were involved in is revealed by Diogenese Laertius who discusses Pythagoras taking part in these initiations and says of him: *and he associated with Chaldaeans and mages. And then in Crete he went down into the Idaean cave with Epimenides, and in Egypt he also descended into crypts. He learned the secrets of the gods.* In other

words the figure of the goes, mage, and evoker was tied to the mysteries of the underworld. Descending into crypts and caves is a journey into the realm of the dead becoming initiated into their mysteries and returning with magical power and the secret knowledge of the gods. These secrets and powers were then put to use in the work of the goes.

What is commonly known about goetes, mages, and evocators was that they were casters of spells. They could curse your enemies, procure love philtres, craft talismans, and perform other feats of magic. They often employed various forms of sympathetic magic as seen in the defixiones, curse-tablets, and effigies; all methods more commonly found in the practices of folk magic. Yet in addition to various spells and magics, these individuals were also famed for dealing with the dead and ghosts. They would often be called on to clear out ghosts, put restless spirits to rest (which was called 'ghost laying'), summon the spirits of the dead, and to act as mediums for them. Of this Euripides writes in his *Alcestis*, referencing Plutarch:

> *There are some evocators* [psychagogoi]*, sorcerers* [goetes] *in Thessaly being so termed, who summon up and drive out ghosts. In fact the Spartans sent for these, when the ghost of Pausanias was frightening away people who tried to approach the temple of Athene of the Bronze House, as Plutarch says in his Homeric Studies.*

This connection to necromancy, sympathetic magic, and initiations into the mysteries of the underworld are all things that are either overlooked or forgotten when goetia is examined post-Medieval Europe.

The function of the goes as a Hellenic shaman dealing in spells and as a specialist dealing with the world of spirits and the dead is one that most likely found its impulse in the archaic magical practices of Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Levant, and Chaldea which took root in the cultural fusion of the Mediterranean world.

Therefore, the practices of the goes, called goetia, are not all that different from those of the African Traditional Religions. Looking at the root of many of the African Traditional Religions one finds the medicine man or shaman known by different names in different nations like 'kimbanda' for the Bantu people of Angola. These shaman would go out to the sacred sites of forests and caves and undergo secret initiations that would bring them into contact with the spirit world and bestow upon them the ability to deal with spirits, cure illnesses, and cast spells. Note that this is not reflective of all African spiritual practices, but is a generalization about the practices of West and Central Africa that gave rise to the ATRs. Like the goes, the practices of these African shamans took root in a culturally diverse region: the New World. It was here that the various diaspora traditions like hoodoo, Palo, Vodou, Quimbanda, Lukumi and others were born. And like the goes, the specialists in the various African Traditional Religions are tied to the spirit world. They too are called upon to clear out ghosts, lay restless spirits, summon the dead, and commune with them whilst performing other magical feats. Given the similarities in function as well as the near identical shamanic impulse that gave rise to both the goetia and the African Traditional Religions, it seems more productive not to view them as separate entities, but parallel traditions that can be used to inspire growth and exploration into each of their mysteries. For indeed if the ATRs are the mystery cults that sprung from Africa taking root in the New World then the goetia is not simply a magical

system, but the mystery religion that sprang up from the ancient practices of the goes and took root in the Mediterranean world. One may even talk about initiation into goetia and to rediscover this, the process of evocation in the grimoires must be examined afresh.

Since Medieval times, goetic practice has been narrowly defined as the conjuration of demons with its methods outlined in the various grimoires. Yet, in light of the research into the roots of goetia which reveal it to be a mystery cult revolving around the underworld, it would be wise to re-examine the process outlined in the grimoires with these new insights. Indeed, it was a similar insight that allowed Jake Stratton-Kent to discover that the use of an intermediary spirit in the *Grimorium Verum* (Scirlin), was actually the remnant of an older practice revolving around familiar spirits and intermediaries found in goetia. Likewise, evocation can be seen as the remnant of the initiatory rites of the goes, magos, and psychagogoi. Hermetic magician Frater Rufus Opus and grimoire magus Michael Cecchetelli, author of *Crossed Keys,* both touch on the point of evocation and the process leading up to it as a form of initiation. Many other magi have indicated the profound spiritual experiences they had whilst performing the preliminary rites leading up to evocation, such as preparing the tools, performing ablutions, and reciting various prayers. Each of these experiences can be seen as part of a greater initiation that culminates with the mystery revealed in the actual act of evocation.

With the evolution of the culture and civilization that housed the goes, it is likely that the process of initiation also changed. Gone was the access to groups of goetes, or sacred caves, and instead there seems to have been a need for a process of self-initiation, one that would replace the need to travel to the underworld. Therefore evocation is not just a magical operation, but one with a specific purpose: spiritual initiation. The processes leading up to initiation allow the mage to slowly come into contact with the world of spirits, develop the necessary faculties and power while evocation proper acts as the substitute for the journey into the underworld. By calling up the spirits, one is merging their world with the human world, bringing the underworld to the mage. A similar evolution seems to have taken place in the African Traditional Religions. Having been forced across the Atlantic, the African shamans and spirit-workers had to evolve and adapt. They no longer had access to their secret societies and sacred sites and so new initiation rites were born; rites that allowed the spirits of both nature and the world of the dead to come into the various houses and lives of their devotees.

It is therefore not a far stretch to see that just as the African Traditional Religions adapted, so too did goetia and that the perspective of modern magi who viewed evocation as the end result would be out of line with the historical roots of the tradition. Instead of the end, evocation is the initiation developed as a result of changing culture and civilization where the evoker enters into the mysteries.

Spiritual initiations are defined by their ability to transform the initiate and allow them access into a whole new world. This is the exact result of any true goetic evocation. The tools and implements made by the goes can be seen as adding to the overall process leading up to the full immersion produced in the final process of summoning an entity. The tools themselves do not seem entirely necessary for evocation proper, as there are many minimalist grimoires that achieve the same results with half the fuss. It is likely then that the

process of making the various implements is aimed at attuning the aspiring goes and evoker to the spiritual realities about to be conjured. Experience reveals that the time leading up to an evocation is often filled with spiritual visitations, vivid dreams, heightened psychic awareness, and can be a time of profound magical insight.

Evocation itself is an earth-shattering experience that often leaves the evoker in a unique frame of mind after a successful conjuration. The first time a person looks up and sees a spirit visibly looking back, a shift in paradigm occurs that transforms the way the evoker thinks and acts from that point on. In that moment all the laws of reality that materialistic physics have engrained on the developing mind tumble away and a new way to look at the universe is revealed. It is these experiences that characterize evocation and the process leading up to it as a spiritual initiation – one likely evolved from the cave, crypt, and crossroads rites of the classical goes.

The experiences that result from evocation mirror those of the African Traditional Religions. Initiations in these paths are aimed at opening the mind of the aspirant by tearing away the preconceived notions of reality and immersing the individual in the world of spirit, often literally, through the medium of possession. Ultimately what both goetia and the ATRs share is the idea that through initiation the aspirant takes the first step into the mysteries preserved by both paths. One may even find noticeable effects upon the personality of a person who has undergone what can often be a rigorous ordeal, whether it is spending hours chanting, dancing, and calling down the spirits through petitions and offerings, or whether it is waking up at all hours, interrupting rest to craft specific magical implements, perform spiritual purifications, and partake in mystical prayers. The difference in the initiations lies in the overt nature of the ATRs versus the implied nature of goetic initiation.

Tied to the concept of these initiations is the gaining of a spiritual familiar. In the classical practices of the goes, the concept of the intermediary spirits was often strongly tied to the idea of entering into the underworld and returning not only with metaphorical knowledge, but with a literal guide who would then continue instruction after the initiation. Similarly we find various crossroad rites to Hecate and Hermes with a similar intent. It is interesting to note that both in goetia and the ATRs groves, crossroads, caves, and graveyards act as sacred points by which to enter the world of spirit. In the ATRs the concept of a personal patron spirit is deeply tied to initiation and so in this a link is revealed between initiation into the mysteries and the gaining of a spiritual ally.

One of the most talked about and a debated idea in Western Occultism is that of the Holy Guardian Angel, a celestial being who acts as guide, teacher, and protector for the magus. Yet this concept is most likely the descendent of far older traditions. In fact, the Holy Guardian Angel can be argued to be the child of Mesopotamian and Græco-Roman patron deities fused with the goetic concept of familiar spirits. With the moralization of the chthonic versus the celestial the very chthonic familiar of the goes was deemed evil and therefore its function was absorbed into the celestial Holy Guardian Angel. This is not to suggest that the HGA is the intermediary of the goes, but rather that its roots can be traced back to the fusion of the two older concepts.

While initiations were used to bestow special pow-

ers and knowledge upon the goes, so too did they provide the goes with a familiar spirit through whose agency the goes could carry out his various charms and necromantic activities. This is not unlike the Witch of Endor (*First Book of Samuel* 28:3–25) who was said to possess a familiar spirit and through it be able to summon the shades of the dead. In the practices of goetia the concept of the familiar spirit is seen in relation to sending out ghosts to carry out certain deeds. This is a common theme in Latin novels where witches and sorcerers sent out ghosts to haunt a victim and even to murder them. This concept is further elaborated in the Greek Magical Papyri where there are countless charms that involve working through the agency of an intermediary spirit used to call other spirits or gods and carry out various spells. What is unique is that recorded in the Papyri are rites that act as a kind of self-initiation where the magus is granted special powers as well as a personal daimon. In these rites the evoker is given detailed instructions that involve purifications, ablutions, rules about abstaining from foods, activities and instructions on how to craft the necessary ritual objects and tools (PGM I. 42–195) – all very similar to the processes outlined in the grimoires for evocation. The rites found within the Greek Magical Papyri, especially those with the aim of procuring a magical familiar could be said to be the bridge between the initiation rites of the classical and archaic goes and the evocation rites that replaced them. Using the African Traditional Religions as inspiration, the modern goes can approach evocation in this spirit. More importantly, just like their counterparts in the ATRs, the modern goes should use evocation not as a means to giving commands to spirits, but rather as a means by which to enter into communion with the world of spirits by gaining entrance into their world and obtaining a familiar who will act as their guide in that world.

In the various African Traditional Religions this step is crucial for initiation. In Vodou the initiate must discover their head Lwa and who walks with them, and then enter into congress with them, in the Orisa cults of Lukumi and Candomble the same is done where the head Orisa is determined, whereas in Palo the power of a mpungo is channeled and worked through a personal familiar spirit of the dead, or nfumbe. Here the concept of the familiar spirit, access to the spirit world, and initiation are intimately connected.

A similar idea is hinted at in the evocations found in the grimoires. Many grimoires give the instruction that after the spirit has been summoned to dismiss it with the agreement that the spirit would then be willing to return when called, presumably without the ordeal of evocation. One may even see this as a sort of pact, a topic thoroughly explored in the works of Jake Stratton-Kent in his *True Grimoire* which he links to the practices of the classical goetes and demonstrates how the *Grimorium Verum* may have best preserved the ideas and methods of its classical predecessors. Of the License to Depart this grimoire instructs the evoker to say:

Go in peace, N… whence you came, peace be with you and come every time I shall call you. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

What is implied in the structure of the *License to Depart* is that evocation is not over when the spirit leaves. The evoker and the spirit form a bond in which the spirit returns and aids the magician whenever it is called revealing that evocation begins a process that leads to further

communing. Examining the function of the spirits in the grimoires by looking through their catalogue, one is struck by how many of the spirits are reputed to grant familiars. The attributes and powers recorded are those things of interest to the evoker; wealth, love, honor and fame, secret knowledge, and just as equally important, the obtaining of a spirit familiar.

It is therefore likely that the grimoires have preserved in their current format various streams from the older goetia, with the idea that evocation would act as a sort of self-initiation rite that allows the evoker access into the mysteries of the underworld, grants magical powers, and bestows a familiar spirit. It is with the aid of that familiar that the modern goes would be able to unlock the secrets of goetia and empower his or her spells.

The format of grimoires like *The Black Dragon* and *Grimorium Verum* seem to support the idea of evocation acting as an initiation leading to the means by which to power spells and charms. This is found with the secrets section often labeled *Of Natural and Supernatural Secrets*. If evocation acts as the means by which to achieve initiation, then this section would be the application of the power received from initiation and the obtaining of a spirit familiar. Records of the ancient goes indicate that after their journey into the underworld via initiation they were granted powers to work spells, usually through the agency of spirits and especially their familiar spirit. *The Natural and Supernatural Secrets* corresponds to the spells and charms of the classical and archaic goes. Indeed, through the initiation provided by evocation and under the guidance of the familiar spirit granted by the process, the mage can unravel the secrets of power behind these spells and take their magic to a new level.

Like many of the African Traditional Religions, the spells provided in the grimoires can be worked without initiation, but they are taken to a whole new level for one initiated into the mysteries behind them. The inner workings of the world of spirits and how to truly empower the spells are revealed by the results of initiation/evocation. Similarly the ability to craft your own spells through the agency of the spirits becomes a natural extension of these powers. Ultimately what is found within the *Supernatural and Natural Secrets* is the arsenal of the modern goes – all he needs to carry out the spells to harm, heal, and work wonders; something that is reminiscent of the shamanic impulse that gave rise to the goetia. This would assume that the writers of these texts included these sections not randomly, but as part of an entire system.

My own experience has shown that working directly with the spirits in such a way provides effective results. In his *True Grimoire*, Jake Stratton-Kent points out how the *Natural and Supernatural Secrets* may hold the keys towards developing one's own goetic spells. This was something I experienced while working with the spirit Guland of whom the *Grimorium Verum* says:

Guland, known also as Galant, can cause or heal all sicknesses, even the venereal ones. Also said: causes all illnesses. Also said: he has the power to impart disease and sickness to whosoever ye wish, and to cure them if you wish.

Given his ability to cause illness in the *Grimoirium Verum* there is one spell entitled *Death Spell by Image Magic* that involves working with Guland. It states:

Make a wax doll representing the person you wish to destroy, slit the head, chest, and stomach and insert the sigils of Frimost, Guland, and Surgat. Impale the image head to foot and turn

over the brazier saying: It is not my hand which scorches thee, it is the hand of Frimost which scorches thee. It is not wax which I scorch, it is the head, heart and spleen of NN *that I scorch.*

Through the agency of Guland, I was able to modify this spell to do the exact opposite. I fashioned a wax doll representing the person I sought to heal, I placed the seal of Guland within it and used an herb-infused bath to wash the doll while reciting a small invocation to Guland. The effects were quite astounding as the person in question had a nearly immediate reversal of the illness they were suffering from – one that had plagued them for quite some time. This was all made possible by approaching the grimoires using the African Traditional Religions as inspiration to tap into the historical root of goetia – understanding the role of evocation as an initiation, altering the aims of the evocation from not only summoning a spirit, but creating an alliance in which I was granted a relationship with spirits and working through the insights granted by that relationship to explore the mysteries of life, death, and healing with the aid of one of the underworld spirits of the *Grimorium Verum*.

This manner of working is very similar to how the African Traditional Religions work, but is more in line with the historical root of goetia than the reliance on evocation to summon spirits and issue commands. With this in mind, if the modern goes would alter his or her approach to the grimoires by allowing some of the inspiration from the African Traditional Religions to recapture the shamanic impulse of the classical goetia, then the entire system outlined in the various grimoires transforms from a mere magical system into a modern day mystery religion for the Western mind. This lends itself nicely to effective magic and reveals a complete system hidden within incomplete grimoires. While many have attempted to fill in the gaps of the grimoires by convoluted kabbalistic associations or the application of Medieval theology, it instead seems more in sync with the spirit of goetia to turn to its historical roots and to allow its sister tradition that shares the same shamanic impulse to help bring the tradition to life. By drawing upon ancient history to revive and its sister traditions in the African Traditional Religions to enflame, the goetia burns anew not as a mechanistic system of magic, but as spirit-centered mystery religion – a mystery religion tied to the secrets of the underworld and magic.

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A GARDEN AMIDST THE FLAMES

LIMINALITY AND INNOVATION IN ESPIRITISMO CRUZADO

O Marvel! A garden amidst the flames. My heart has become capable of every form: it is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks, and a temple for idols and the pilgrim's Ka'ba, and the tables of Torah and the book of the Quran. I follow the religion of Love: whatever way Love's camels take, that is my religion and my faith. (Ibn 'Arabi, *Tarjuman al-Ashwaq*)

Espiritismo cruzado, translated as *crossed spiritism*, operates as a dynamic, and at times ambiguous intersection of practice – a spiritual crossroads – overlapping and sometimes even transgressing several African-derived religious and magical practices. It is its liminality that has made it at various times either supportive or troubling to the traditions it intersects. As a Creolized form of spiritualism – or to use the more exact term, spiritism, as Allan Kardec preferred to refer to his spiritualist movement – espiritismo cruzado has come to play an important role in the Afro-Cuban religious continuum ranging from Kongo-inspired traditions such as Palo Mayombe to the Yoruba derived Orisha cult of Santeria, whilst retaining autonomy as a religious practice in its own right.

It is this liminality that also makes it problematic to talk about in any overly definitive sense. Like so many traditions in the Caribbean and Latin America it is orally transmitted and therefore exhibits a natural degree of variance in appearance and practice due to any number of given factors, such as the line worked and region. The complexity becomes more pronounced as espiritismo along with Orisha religion and other creolized magical paths have spread throughout the world. Regional variations aside, perhaps what makes it most slippery to discuss is that the cruzado's practice demonstrates a remarkably fluid structure; one in which the slippage of cultural codes and religious signifiers in subtle ways forms part of the way espiritismo is supposed to work.

Espiritismo could be described as porous; exhibiting an ability to both absorb and express a certain amount of fairly diverse religious and cultural ideas within its praxis all the while cooking these into something unmistakably Caribbean-flavored in the Kardecian cauldron of spirits. We see this same undeniable malleability of Kardecian spiritism demonstrated across the New World where an austere French spiritualism has managed to mutate into a legion of colorful and vibrantly evolving African-infused strains such as Umbanda and Kimbanda in Brazil, Sanse in Puerto Rico, Espiritismo Cruzado and Espiritismo de Cordon in Cuba – not to mention the multitude of transformations it undertook in Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica, to name but a few.

Elder espiritistas often enough will admonish the novice that espiritismo should always empower people. It is all too easy for the cynically minded to dismiss this statement as a trite truism, but upon deeper analysis this simple idea is revealed to be the fulcrum of spiritism's efficacy in the hands of the peoples of the New World; and probably the reason that it spread like wildfire so soon after its introduction. Espiritismo's

Chad 'Balthazar' Barber

capacity to help empower the disenfranchised would not only promise a certain kind of freedom with all the social and political charge that this idea brings to those who have suffered the trauma of enslavement; it would also give the practical ability, the agency, to engage in the re-imagining of their own practice of ancestral veneration. Undoubtedly this is one of the main reasons that both the state and Catholic establishment found espiritismo so threatening in both Cuba and Puerto Rico.

While referring to the creation of religious objects and practices Lucumi elders of wise character will admonish: that one should only 'invent' when there is a true need for it and only if the proper 'license' has been given to do so, either by decree of the orishas or by the egun (the ancestors). In a certain sense, this may just be what the advent of spiritism offered communities in the New World: spiritual license from the very root of their collective cultural identities: their ancestors. With the help of this reclaimed authority they were able carve a workable path through rough terrain, and perhaps even a new collective vision of themselves.

The notion of agency through syncretism is often overlooked when discussing the amalgamations and adaptations that took place in the New World, especially when discussing the Catholic or Kardecist contributions. Perspectives that dismiss these European elements off-hand as being the vestigial organs of oppression do not reflect the nuanced understanding necessary to successfully interpret the function of these elements, nor does it take into account the magical sophistication of the people who appropriated them to their own ends. It is through creative syncretism, such as the adaptations built around the séance-based ritual technology of Kardecian spiritism that we see a resourceful and resilient Creole spirit expressed; in a cultural sense certainly, but most importantly, in a mythic ideal that asserts the capacity of the spirits to emerge from the invisible realms in order to help re-establish and support their progeny within a living current of ancestral wisdom and power.

That espiritismo would become a desirable vehicle for reviving the ubiquitous ancestor veneration is not all that surprising either when considering the centrality of the role of the dead in African and Native American cosmologies. It also worth noting that the style of trance mediumship propagated by Kardec was not as far removed as one might imagine from the ancestral possession practices in those regions of Africa from where people were most frequently snatched. Certainly, in Bantu speaking regions of Africa to this day we find remarkably similar praxis with regards to incorporation of spirits of the dead into a medium. An expedient symmetry that no doubt made the spiritual cross-pollination all the more tractable.

It is here that we find perhaps the most interesting and fertile confluence of spiritual and cultural forces in espiritismo cruzado, namely the meeting of the ensouled ancestral waters flowing out of Africa and converging with those freshly emerging spiritualist and occult currents bubbling up in Europe towards the end of the 19th century. This phenomenon, somewhat poetically, mirrored in religious terms the ethnic diversity that was the natural result of intermarriage and forced co-habitation between African, European and Native people living in close proximity in the Caribbean and Latin America. Even African tribes that were historically at war and at one time were responsible for capturing each other to sell into slavery were eventually, by necessity, forced to reconcile and amalgamate their

traditions to various degrees in Cuba.

Taking this into account it becomes more apparent how it is that we find populating the spiritist cosmology of the cruzados phalanxes of spirits similarly organized roughly along ethnic and cultural lines as commissions, which is to say 'nations' of certain classes of spirit that exhibit similar characteristics. We find spirit groupings as diverse as the congos, indians, arabs, madamas, orientals, hindus, witches and gypsies (to name but a few) propitiated as spiritual guides and protectors. This perhaps lent to the realm of the dead a similar kind ethnic diversity as was being encountered first hand by peoples in the rich cultural mélange of the New World.

It's also interesting to note that at least partly due to Kardecian doctrines of reincarnation a broader more inclusive vision of the ancestral realm would become considered operable. A vision that traced ancestral lineage 'spiritually' from an individual to otherwise genetically unrelated spirits of the dead by means of a supposed prenatal connection.

And while it is plausible to posit some level of genetic relation between diverse people that experienced a great deal of intermarriage, what this leap of mythic imagination really does is to allow espiritistas to reasonably cultivate 'ancestral' type relationships with spiritual guides unrelated to their own genetic background, such as say that of an Arab or Gypsy spirit. This tactic in practical terms gives the medium access to a useful variety of differing streams of mythic wisdom and the cultural specialties associated to each grouping of spirit. In this way diverse cultural and indeed magical currents are incorporated, even if sometimes only in broad strokes within the overarching practice of the espiritista.

SETTING THE WHITE TABLE

The world first became introduced to spiritism's nucleus of teachings in the book of orations, *Le Livre des Esprits* (*The Book of Spirits*), authored by Allan Kardec, a French teacher born Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail (1804–1869). Published in 1857, *The Book of Spirits* was soon followed by six additional works (all published by 1868) and translated into Spanish from the original French nearly immediately. By the 1860s translations of Kardec's ideas were widely available in Cuba and Puerto Rico where espiritismo quickly grew in prominence. Initially Kardec's ideas drew intellectuals and well-to-do urban elites, but soon espiritismo filtered down into almost every other sector of society. In Cuba eventually it would come to appeal to the Afro-Cuban working class as well as the unemployed. In this way it began functioning as an important interstice between classes and ethnicities forming a common ground between different stratums of society.

Importantly, espiritismo provided a much-needed avenue for healing and counseling services, attracting clientele already familiar with African-based treatment methods. It soon began absorbing the texture of its Creole environment and in this way it grew and changed by taking on aspects of local herbalism, Native American healing methods, and the distinct flavor of African magic.

It has been suggested that the spread of espiritismo coincided with the decline of the few remaining Yoruba egungun specialists in Cuba: the cult traditionally responsible for propitiating the ancestral collective with masked dances and other mysteries. It may be that this complex cult was never able to successfully reconstitute itself as well as the Orisha and Kongo-inspired tra-

ditions had managed to do in Cuba. Considering the vital role that venerating the dead plays in both Orisha religion as well as Bantu cosmology the vital need for an accessible and workable spiritual technology that could fulfill this important role must have made for a receptive audience amongst the priesthood of the Palo and Santeria traditions. Concurrently, Catholics who had grown weary of the church's authoritarian methods were drawn to the more open and egalitarian alternative of Kardecian spiritism, creating a ripe moment for the propagation and evolution of the system.

In Cuba several forms of espiritismo would take shape influenced by these emergent social and cultural pressures. These ranged from the more strictly Kardecist 'scientific' spiritism to more syncretic 'crossed' forms exhibiting stronger African and Native American influences, which has become broadly defined as espiritismo cruzado – not to be confused with santerismo which is another hybrid that fuses orisha worship with Kardecian spiritism, which the cruzados do not. We do find lively techniques such as song, clapping and dance to help move mediums into trance states; the spiritual application of herbs deployed in spiritual washes or the creation bundles used as spiritual brooms to spiritually clean congregants; the creation of spirit-dolls as focal points for the spirits' presence, the incorporation and ritual manipulation of the ancestral staff (palo de muerto which is thought to be an appropriated form of the egungun cult's *opa iku*); as well as the use of cigars, alcohol and perfumes – elements that can only be described as magical. All these ingredients were blended, based on varying degrees of cultural influence and taste and so forming the fluid repertoire of the espiritismo cruzado.

Even though African and Native American elements would infuse the spiritism of the cruzados their application of these methods would take the form of masses, misas espirituales. These sessions, somewhat akin to American and European spiritualist séances retain as a ritual focus the famous mesa blanca. This serene white table is adorned with flowers, white candles and a large clear glass container (usually a large fish-bowl or goblet, filled with cool clean water) called the bovéda. A cross is often placed in the bowl to bless the water creating the basic arrangement for the establishment of the mesa blanca, which becomes the focus point of spiritual forces during the session, the point of ingress. This is usually accompanied by the use of spiritual perfumes and holy water from a catholic church, which are placed nearby or on the white table itself. A basin with a specially prepared herbal wash for ritual ablutions during and after the misa is also sometimes placed beneath the table so that mediums can splash themselves with the blessed lustral waters making spiritually potent cleansing gestures to clean away spiritual intrusion and unwanted negativity as they do.

Making use of the orations by Kardec, mediums dressed usually in white gather in a circular formation and once sanctified with a litany of prayers and song the table is opened for communication allowing mediums to move into the various stages of trance and possession. In this manner the spirits can begin to communicate with participants imparting spiritual remedies for problems, giving advice and council, or, spiritually cleansing and healing participants through the vehicle of the medium. With a minimum of elaboration a fresh channel for ancestral knowledge and intervention is opened up, a deceptively simple act with far-reaching results.

Mesa blanca's modest amount of paraphernalia

combined with relative simplicity of ritual made the practice all the more attractive to the poor and uneducated whilst simultaneously satisfying the upper classes to whom the practice may have seemed more 'civilised' than the other African-derived cults. Further, it could be argued that the mesa blanca format resists commodification – because, as an elder of the author likes to quip: *it's hard to sell a bowl of water*. This is a point that warrants all the more consideration in a religious and economic landscape, both in Cuba and abroad, where the commodification of religious objects and rites stands in continual tension with a need to retain the integrity of tradition.

CROSSING BOUNDARIES

The point that requires ever-greater nuance in the discussion of liminality in the practice and the ritual innovation of espiritistas is the inherent ambiguity in so many mediums' religious status itself. While some espiritistas certainly do remain purely within the Catholic-influenced Kardecian mode of working mesa blanca, without turning to any of the African-derived cults for initiation, many cruzados will naturally maintain multiple religious associations while also operating as espiritistas. It is not uncommon to find spiritist mediums who are also working as initiated Paleros, or Santeros (or both), and the resultant interweaving of ideas, methods and symbols in that varied religious continuum makes it hard to decipher which 'part' of the practitioner was taking the lead or motivating certain ritual choices or adaptations in either the cruzado mode of working spiritism or the related initiatory tradition that it becomes so carefully dove-tailed into.

As already discussed, the necessity for the veneration of the dead and the efficacious technology that espiritismo brings to the table, so to speak, probably accounts for how it has become commonplace for many Santeria iles and Palo munansos to hold misas for various purposes related to the mysteries of their own cult. For instance, in some Santeria lines and houses, before *asiento* (the pivotal Santeria rite in which the initiate is 'crowned' as priest through a certain Orisha) a series of three misas need to be held (at a minimum) thereafter culminating in a 'spiritual' coronation. This is done so that the initiate can receive the critically important blessing of the initiate's ancestral framework for asiento, and without which matters cannot proceed smoothly.

While the boundaries are vociferously guarded between espiritismo and the cults that it so delicately dances with in Cuba and abroad, this degree of overlap accounts for the introduction of certain objects and materials into the repertoire of the espiritista cruzados. Further complicating the slippage of these religious signifiers from neighboring practices into espiritismo is the fact that a medium might have in his or her spiritual framework ancestral guides that were affiliated in life to a specific Afro-Cuban cult or practice whilst the medium does not necessarily share those same religious affiliation. Such a spirit may ask for certain substances or objects associated with the cult that it has the premortem connection to, even though the espiritista is not an initiate of that tradition.

For instance, a santero the author interviewed recounts an amusing story about receiving a reading from an espiritista who had gained a reputation for giving hair-raisingly accurate spiritual consultations, but what was most remarkable about the medium was his means of divination. The espiritista produced an

opele chain of the sort that is used by babalawos to divine through Ifa, and proceeded to cast the chain in a style reminiscent of Ifa divination, from which he then quickly produced a highly accurate spiritual reading. The espiritista explained he had a powerful babalawo spirit in his spiritual framework who liked working with the opele chain, as it had in life. However, rather than being used to divine through Ifa, by deriving *odu* and prescribing remedial treatments and advices endemic to the Ifa cult, the opele chain in the hands of this espiritista became a means of connecting with this important ancestral guide's influence instead. He made it clear to his client that he was not a babalawo and that the client was not receiving an Ifa consultation. Naturally, the espiritista's appropriation caused raised eyebrows by many and in particular drew criticism from babalawos who interpreted his use of their sacred divining chain as a transgression of their religious mysteries. He was accused of being a 'crazy espiritista.' The espiritista remained adamant that his own use of the opele in this spiritist context was not only entirely different to theirs but valid because it was sanctioned by his own egun.

These kind of transgressive acts have led to espiritistas being viewed by some as liminal trickster characters prone to unpredictable or even outrageous behavior. Perhaps this is not unwarranted since the dead themselves can be equally unpredictable.

Similarly, one might find a medium with the spirit of deceased santero as guide who was a priest of Obatala, and that spirit asking for a white cane (an object usually associated with the orisha itself). Alternatively, a gypsy spirit might ask for a switchblade and a pack of tarot cards, understanding that gypsies are thought of as streetwise fortunetellers.

Taking this mechanism into account it becomes easy to account for the varied and sometimes even peculiar repertoire of magical objects, gestures and substances each espiritista can potentially accrue in their work. This is especially so when considering the sheer diversity of spirits of the dead a medium might identify to be in their spiritual court and that each spirit will have its own preferences, demands and contributions to the espiritistas work. This creates a situation in which, although always patterned in a distinctly Caribbean style, a medium can nonetheless develop a highly individualized corpus of spirit-driven healing and magical tricks; making for formidable spirit technicians, diviners and healers.

THE CAULDRON AT THE CROSSROADS

Enter the controversial *caldero espiritual*: the occulted, liminal but fascinating spiritual cauldron. The caldero espiritual visually and in some sense, mechanically, resembles Palo Mayombe's *nganga* but nonetheless exhibits many important differences that distinguish it from the original Kongo-derived religious mystery. Before we can begin to further unpack the meaning and use of this 'spiritual' adaptation it might be useful to briefly discuss the application and use of the term espiritual in relationship to these diaspora traditions.

When something is said to have been created and consecrated espiritual it is understood to have been given a certain kind of spiritual charge in as much as it has been consecrated to the point where it can serve to carry out a specific function similar (but never identical) to that carried out by the proper cultic object that it is in a subtle sense, mimicking. However, it is not

fully consecrated as the 'original' cultic object, image or pot traditionally is consecrated. This is usually done to support an immediate and pressing need of some sort, or because there is no desire to go through the full consecration process due to reluctance (or inability) to get involved to the maximum extent of religious or ritual commitment that this might demand.

Or, and this is where it gets tricky, the creators of the object do not have the credentials to consecrate the original object 'validly' yet there is the requirement, and importantly – the spiritual skill – necessary to create something similar to it. Contrary to what one might expect when hearing this, this particular course of action can be sanctioned legitimately for many different reasons. For instance because an egun has asked for it, it was mandated by a reading, or because there is a pressing social or personal need to use something that works in roughly the same way that the original does. Need and circumstance have always played a pivotal role in all religious and magical adaptation in New World.

This sort of adaptation then gives the recipient a 'spiritual' simulacrum of a certain mystery that allows them to connect to that spectrum of energy without necessarily being bound by all the commitments (or benefits for that matter) associated with the original mystery. Nor does it ever connect to the full extent possible as when initiated legitimately into the original religious practice and thus receiving the benefits of its safeguards, and the other religious supports that this brings such as the infusion of the cult's energetic continuity through the act of initiation. This, after all, is the meaning and mystery of initiation.

For example, within Santeria it is the custom that only male santeros should give the orisha Eleggua in the initiation known as receiving the warriors. It is understood that a unique sort of male ashe is required to successfully give these three feisty, masculine deities. This traditionally precludes priestesses (*santeras*) from giving the warriors. However, santeras can and do create a variety of 'spiritual' Eleggua, which is blessed and consecrated to a certain degree and therefore is able to connect to the energy of that orisha in some lesser but yet meaningful capacity even though it has not been born through the full ceremony, requiring animal offerings and other secrets that a priest might use – or the expense. This 'spiritual' Eleggua usually meets some pressing short-term need of a godchild that requires them to receive some degree of access to the deity's influence without necessarily going through the full initiation just yet. This could be required for several reasons but often enough it is as an interim measure while other arrangements are being made. The practice is even adopted by priests who find it useful for many of the same reasons, even though they are able to consecrate the actual orisha. What is important for our discussion here is that in some sense this demonstrates a parallel with regard to consecrating something 'spiritually' within the Afro-Cuban religious continuum.

This brings us back to the complex manifestation of the same idea in the form of caldero espiritual. This adaptation, to the chagrin of some, unmistakably draws on the necromantic technology of the Palo nganga, employing some of its main components and metaphysical concepts without ever fully recreating the nganga proper in its authentic sense. The caldero espiritual is something that looks like and in some ways can be used to accomplish similar sorcerous 'works' to that of the prenda, but ultimately, is a limited adaptation that was

created to meet a specific need at a specific time.

Like the nganga the caldero espiritual usually takes the form of a large iron pot or cauldron (*caldero*) containing an assemblage of spiritually significant materials and objects such as certain kinds of dirt, a stone (*fundamento*), a certain number of sticks (*palos*), metal implements (so that it can fight and work), sometimes a crucifix to sanctify it before God. This creates a concentration of energies which are understood to be strongly resonant to the 'Kongo' spiritual spectrum.

What exactly goes into the caldero espiritual varies. As an elder who is a santero and caldero-wielding espiritista ominously remarked to the author: *unlike the nganga, the caldero espiritual has no reglas* (rules). This might sound like it could make for a creative magical enterprise to the layman, but to those familiar with such pots this really warns that the strictures and bindings that safeguard the user are similarly absent. As such it is not uncommon to hear espiritistas sharing tales of ill-advised spiritual cauldrons running amok, at first turning their owners' life upside down before slowly cannibalizing them spiritually, mentally and physically. Although this is not necessarily the outcome of working with such a pot – especially considering their prevalence – it certainly should the give cavalier experimenter some food for thought.

In some cases the caldero espiritual is fed with blood in the form of animal offerings and other cases where a 'lighter' pot is needed the device is simply blessed and consecrated systemically until it has built up an appropriate amount of dynamism behind it to function as potent necromantic nexus. If a pot were to ever 'taste' the blood of a human either by accident or design it would immediately be dismantled lest it devour the wielder.

One might ask: what then makes the caldero espiritual different to the nganga?

Firstly and very importantly there is no enslaved *nfumbe* bound to the caldero espiritual. The nfumbe is a graveyard spirit represented by human bones within the traditional nganga and is bound by mutual pacts, chains and ritual incantations to serve as intermediary between the palero and the cosmic forces (*mpungo*) under whose ægis the true nganga is consecrated. Considering that the palero's pact with the nfumbe (in relationship to the cosmic principle that it mediates) is the central mystery of the nganga this already establishes that no matter what the resemblance visually or in application the caldero espiritual is something else. We might argue that caldero espiritual is an alternative 'species' of spirit pot within the Kongo 'genus' – one that is the result of the spiritist hybridization.

Instead to the enslaved nfumbe, the caldero espiritual in a nuanced sense is understood to be dynamised by muertos from within the practitioner's spiritual framework (usually of the Kongo variety), or to put it in another way; that it acts as nexus for those kinds of forces. During an interview with one palero who was sympathetic to use of the spiritual pot, the author asked about the mechanism behind the power of caldero espiritual taking this crucial difference into account, the palero speculated that the caldero worked like a kind of mesa blanca. This statement was quite puzzling at first, but then it became clear to the author that he was comparing the caldero to the white table and boveda configuration itself – as a spiritist device – rather than the practice of mesa blanca in general. Implying that like the boveda the caldero espiritual is a point of ingress, but unlike that of the white table setup in which the aim is to cool and elevate the spir-

its working through that point of ingress – the caldero espiritual heats, and materialises them in a way more resonant with Kongo ideals. This in turn accounts for the more sorcerous potential of the pot.

The comparison is all the more intriguing when you take into account that the boveda espiritual is a pot-like container, albeit made of glass, filled with water as a spirit-conductive medium and sanctified with a cross. Looked at in a certain way this can be understood as a 'cool' mirror image of the nganga which too is a pot, but instead is filled with dirt, blood and bone.

Nontheless, the caldero espiritual is a distinctly different proposition to that of the nganga with its bound nfumbe, sometimes even referred to as the 'dog' of the prenda. A coldly efficient spirit, raw as it is earthbound due to the complex and arduous ritual sorceries that so thoroughly enmesh, subjugate and materialise its presence. This, espiritistas will argue, is what makes the caldero espiritual more 'elevated' in Kardecist terms. Nothing, after all, is enslaved. Paleros will counter that this in fact is what makes a spiritual cauldron dangerous; because, you see, a palero can command a recalcitrant nganga spirit to do as he wishes and it must obey. The forces acting through the caldero espiritual however might not necessarily be as accommodating, even though they may well be equally corrosive.

We should not be so sloppy as to assume that the caldero espiritual is simply a crude facsimile – the much reviled *invento* – put together by imaginative espiritistas. This would underestimate the religious and magical sophistication of the people who first devised them. In fact it becomes hard to definitively locate where exactly caldero espiritual fits within the Afro-Cuban religious spectrum at all when taking into account the ambivalence of the fact that paleros who were also espiritistas may well have been the ones to first consecrate these spiritual pots. The truth is that the spiritual cauldron never was part of the original paraphernalia of espiritistas – although there seems to be a valid case being made for espiritistas using them – in part, one supposes, because they are *muerteros*, those who deal in the mysteries of the dead.

Adding further fuel to the fire – there are certain *odu* in Cuban Ifa that seem to ratify the creation of the caldero espiritual. Specifically, Okanran Ika mentions the creation of caldero espiritual explicitly and Otura Obara gives the right to 'create' a pact with *egun* (the dead), which has been interpreted by some as the required 'license' to do so. Naturally this generates a storm of outrage and confusion with many paleros asserting that such pots are aberrations of tradition, while certain branches of Palo seem to endorse limited forms of the caldero espiritual, provided paleros consecrate them. Further, it appears that due to its liminality and lack of 'official' cultic regulation the phenomenon has spawned a variety of different kinds of spiritual cauldron some which seem to resemble nganga so closely that the creation is almost on a par with the true mystery, while others move much closer to Kardecian conceptions with all the malleability and variation that this implies.

Naturally this raises many important and troubling questions about continuity of tradition, authenticity and invention. When asked whether he felt the caldero espiritual was an aberration, a fraudulent facsimile, one palero responded with the political adage: after long enough the 'lie' becomes the truth and invention becomes tradition. He pointed out that regardless of what anyone said, the caldero espiritual has been around for several generations. More pragmatic prac-

titioners dismiss the whole controversy of legitimacy with a shrug, saying that false or not, these pots are the real thing in as much as they get the needed results.

Who then, would or should receive or use a caldero espirtual? It remains highly debatable and as can be expected from the diaspora cults there seems to be no definitive doctrinal answer though strong opinions abound. We can observe that, certainly in practical terms, a caldero espiritual seems to be given to someone when they need something that can function in a similar way to a true prenda – for purposes of defending against sorcery, actively working sorcery and witchcraft, or for heavy duty spiritual cleansing – but for various reasons may not be eligible to be initiated into Palo Mayombe. Reasons may include being a woman of certain age, being a homosexual, taboos issued by Ifa, or simply the unwillingness to accept the heavy commitment that involves initiating as a palero combined with a contrasting need to work in a very similar way.

For instance, an espiritista working misa espirituales for large groups of people may well find themselves in a community that sees a high prevalence of paleros. The espiritista will sooner or later encounter a spiritual problem that needs to be responded to with the appropriate tool and this is where the caldero espiritual has been found to be both useful and necessary for cleansing and protection.

Similarly, the recipients of the caldero espiritual can employ the pot to perform sorceries and darker coercive workings for paying clientele. Sorceries of the nature one might normally associate with Palo methods along with associated speed and merciless magical efficiency of that tradition add a distinct financial incentive.

Yet, whether a spiritual pot becomes an instrument of good or evil seems primarily dependent on the motivations of its owner. Taking into account that various kinds of spiritual works have the effect of shaping and thus 'creating' the character and temperament of the pot as an ongoing process, special care needs to taken – because, as was told to the author: the caldero espiritual has no rules. And that particular sword cuts both ways.

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THE SYNCRETIC SOUL AT THE CROSS OF COSMIC UNION

As we survey the history of world religions, we find the nature of the phenomenon to be one following a reproductive route of continuous hybridization. There is, therefore, no small irony in the knee-jerk reaction of so many sectarian schools against their cherished traditions meeting, mingling with and metamorphosing through influences whose modus operandi lies outside the defending dogma's claims to total revelation. In almost all cases, the purity of the tradition thus sullied is already a child of much mixed blood, masquerading as a pedigree. Voodoo, for example, emerged from the attempts of Catholicism to subjugate African religion. This Catholicism was itself the product of Roman Paganism appropriating the beliefs of straggling Christian cults for the purpose of political power. These cults? They sprung out from the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth who declared, perhaps presciently, *I am the Vine and Ye are the Branches.* The Nazarene, however, didn't appear in a vacuum but was a Jew whose messianic identity derived from that very religion. Judaism itself had been occupied with the theft of heathen myth in its own Holy Writ, stealing its tales of Creation and the Great Flood from the Babylonians.

Despite these observations, we cannot conclude that this movement from one religious form to another is a simple or linear sequence of systemic growth and change, easily traced on a crisp and clean flowchart to some primordial point. While one religion begins to splinter into its sundry sects (like cellular growth in the womb), another is already busy breeding with *strange women*. Even within the same organization, and adhering to the same credo, every human being has their own fingerprint-unique religious genealogy. No two beings are experiencing reality through their conceptual framework in the same manner. Even within the individual mind, one's belief, practice and outlook is constantly being sharpened (or shattered) against the ever shifting seas of Life.

Dogmatism, of course, is a powerful reactionary force against this process of perpetual development. It might be regarded as a type of spiritual inbreeding which can only produce idiots (even if they be heir to a great power). The impulse towards self-preserving stagnation is matched by the impetus towards growth, and these two tendencies run tandem unto each new generation. Yesterday's radical reformation becomes todays protected palace, even at the expense of the same spirit which set its stones into place. The crucified savior is destined to roll away the stone and rise transfigured, yet the spirits of denial and control would keep him eternally pinioned upon the cross.

Alternative religious movements, whether mainstreamed or embraced by a fleeting fistful, are often contrasted by their adherents against the iron bars of ossified and barren ideologies. Smug in their enlightenment, liberality and alignment with happier values, these 'little children' can be found following the flag of freedom back into imprisonment. The wild twisting vine, emerging through crumbling concrete, may once again form the bonds that bind. Consider the parents who foist personal predilections upon the children

Kyle Fite

without regard for their individual tendencies and path through life. A road that is righteous for the father may prove damning to the son, but the branching outward is seldom welcomed. There is an overshadowing desire for the individual unit to replicate itself. Metamorphosis and evolution reflect, and force confrontation with, the limits of previous forms.

The fields of magic and the occult are in no wise free of this trend. In many ways, we find various esoteric organizations and groups to be microcosmic variants on the macrocosmic theme. Refugees from a cold Catholic upbringing have embraced Crowley's *Book of the Law* as some infallible word, perfect as their former Bible, not a letter to be tampered with. Thelemites of various camps can be found fighting less like Brothers and more as their counterparts in any other religious splinter groups. Nor is this a singling out of one particular group. From Buddhist bodies in burgeoning cities to small covens in small towns, there seems to be a ubiquitous division between Us and Them. Whether we witness the snide sniping tongue or severed heads, the home territory seems desperate for defense.

It's part of the picture.

Despite this rather dour depiction, the push towards progression remains ever-present. We have something of an endless war in the history of human spirituality. The hunger for Eternal Truth is challenged by an ever present gravitation towards the need for Absolute Truth's promise of certainty. As experience broadens to encompass previously undreamt of states of being, the human mind is tempted to accept an Initiatory Chamber as its grand stop-point when this Sanctum Sanctorum may really be serving as the Outer Court to a yet Greater Temple.

It is with a view towards this scenario that we would like to consider the relatively recent emergence of African religion into the post-Crowleyan Western Mystery Tradition. We have precedent for the influence of African religion on esoteric thought prior to this. However, it has been primarily through the work of Michael Bertiaux (and the incorporation of his work into the writings of Kenneth Grant) that Voodoo has begun to find a prominent place in our modern magical movement. This is something we do not find, for example, in curricula of the Golden Dawn, despite its undeniably sweeping influence. With Grant, Voodoo becomes a vital element in the perpetuation of the current in the West.

Antipathy towards this integration has arisen from a variety of circles. There are a myriad of Voodoo traditionalists who would not know what to do with Bertiaux's *Voudon-Gnostic Workbook*, in which the Loa cavort comfortably amongst UFOs, H.P. Lovecraft, modern philosophy and the Kami spirits of Japan. Similarly, the sophistication surrounding many magical schools seems more magnetically drawn to a European intellectualism than those roots running deep beneath African soil. There remains a view of tribal religion as savage or superstitious, ill-fitting with an occult path asking of its acolytes the equivalent of a college education to simply begin the Great Work.

Between these two worlds, there is an invisible bridge which has long sought manifestation in space-time. Upon this bridge, the forms of tradition and the dynamic growth principle may meet in a Chemical Wedding whereby antipathy is dissolved in an alembic of advancement, transcendent as it is immanent. This asks of every man and woman the courage to rise into a new mode of being whereby form and essence may be joined in a living body.

II

Voodoo is the Religion of the Future.

This may seem, at first glance, to be an odd statement, especially in the context of our previous words regarding how the tribal pulse has been historically felt by the Westerner. Never the less, it is true.

It should be clear at this point that the establishment of a one size fits all teaching is neither realistic nor progressive. The human race, at its core, cries out for both of these things and any religion which can claim value must answer to these two fundamental needs.

The word *Voodoo* simply means *Spirit*. What we may study or experience in 'Voodoo Culture' is a Way or Means of relating to Spirit. This is, fundamentally, an existential and ontological concern. We have arrived at this juncture of human experience in the universe with a modicum of self-awareness. This calls forth a series of inquiries which may vex or liberate us. It is also the origin of ALL our human religions.

The collision between African religion and Catholicism was more momentous than the Church could have ever conceived. This was, in essence, a showdown between powers and principalities on the inner plane. There was never a question in the mind of the Church as to who would win. Armed with superior technology, weaponry and the blessing of 'God,' the slave trade sought to shave away the 'Gods' who followed their newly acquisitioned property. They didn't understand that these Gods were all living elements comprising the Body of GOD. In the Name of the Most High, a Golden Calf was set against the Fire which lit the Burning Bush.

The Calf would melt.

III

In his Voudoo Research Paper entitled *The Loa and Les Vudu*, Michael Bertiaux writes:

Voudoo research does not mean…that we try and read all of the books on Voudoo, or that we collect information already written by looking up references to Voudoo in a wide variety of publications on this subject. It means, instead, that we do something new, that we bring about a diffusion of the influences of Voudoo Spirits, here in the world. It means to make use of the energies of the Voudoo Gods, in ways which are appropriate to the ways in which the Gods as spirits operate in the world.

This is a tremendously Gnostic declaration. It asks of the reader to enter into a direct relationship with the Voudoo Gods who must be present and part of the Continuum of Reality. Furthermore, it is indicated that there is diffusion yet to take place. A religion claiming teachings of a be all-end all nature cannot serve this work, which asks for interaction with powers that have yet to enter the world.

One does not think of their work, their family or their community activities as a religion. These things are simply interaction with life. Voodoo, however, understands that Spirit permeates all of these areas. Its scope goes beyond what we call the marketplace but Voodoo does not seek escape from the world we live in. Rather, it draws us more deeply into that world.

The would-be broken African Soul, asked to submit to the 'True Religion' proclaimed by his captors, would find, in an alien belief system, symbols and types awaiting inhabitation by those Spirits who traveled across the waves with him. The Crucified Savior was seen as the Lord of the Crossroads, Legbha. Saint Patrick with

his serpents was a fitting form for Lord Damballah, Creator Snake of the Dark Soil. Mary, Virgin Mother to the Christ, was immediately known as Erzulie, the Sorrowing Matron and Lady of Love.

This appropriation was not simply an analogous identification. Behind the covert preservation of the old powers in a new form, there was a logic, a way of effectively knowing the Gods within the human sojourn through the world. Catholicism had established its own iconography from pagan roots and gnostic inspirations. Lust for temporal power seized upon these symbols for its own use. Yet, long after Ozymandias turned to dust, the symbols held their power, their deep and hidden essence. *This magnetic core, unknown to many of the religion's most devout, was what spoke to the African Soul.*

I grieve to think of the horrors which colored this period in time. The human suffering cannot be depicted in quaint illustration or anecdote. This was a time of great evil. Although all the participants in this atrocity are now dead, oppressor and oppressed, they had lived in the world we now occupy. And their lives were driven by the same passions as our own.

We want to honor this. We want to go beyond African-American History Month as some token nod to cultural diversity. We want to touch our ancestors. We want to feel their blood-pulse and give them our own in return.

The Gods are here and watching. We are here and longing.

It is time to connect.

IV

My entry into Occultism was met with a fearful hatred for 'Mediumism' and 'Spiritualism.' These were painted as passive states of mind detrimental to the growth of the Soul. One commanded Lesser Spirits and must ever be wary of the same threatening to break the magic circle and overtake one's Will.

One may as well be perpetually fearful of a pet cat.

It would be the Frenchman, Abbé Joseph-Antoine Boullan, who would suggest a 'Chain of Being' whereby we are advanced through communion with higher beings as we assist those of lower rank through communion with ourselves.

Of Boullan, little is known, historically. He enters the English speaking world through Colin Wilson's *The Occult* and is marked as one of the more controversial figures of occult history. Boullan would seem to be a fetishist of the *verboten* and, yet, this is only through the lens of his detractors. One may as well accept that Aleister Crowley swept through life from one human sacrifice to another, as the contemporary newspapers were happy to announce, providing a prurient product for the populace. Boullan was equally vilified by the press as he stood against an Age of Irrationality, seeking after the heart of those symbols his religion bestowed. The hint of his having sexual relations was enough to conjure images of unwanted children being sacrificed in Black Masses and his true purpose was shrouded in rumor and fear.

We are interested in this otherwise obscure French Priest for several reasons:

1 He was in communion with entities regarded as both higher and lower than his own spiritual estate.

2 He held a holistic vision of the Continuum of

Reality in which intelligences unknown to the establishment played an essential part. He was, in essence, a type of Spiritualist.

3 He has forged an alliance with the Magical Fraternity known as the OTOA-LCN and continues to impart communications through the recently fashioned Boullan Academy of Spiritual Service (B.A.S.S.).

Were our task merely the collection and assembly of verifiable historical data, we would be at a loss. Information is horribly limited. For lack of this, we have gone directly to the source. Boullan is referred to in our work by the name of his previous earthly incarnation, however, we, of the B.A.S.S. group know him by a different title as we work according to guidance given from his present locale in the Cosmic Picture.

V

Alice Bailey, in her *Letters on Occult Meditation*, wrote:

Realize always that the true spiritual effects are to be seen in the exoteric life of service.

This single sentence is one of greater depth and profundity than might be grasped by those who would view it as typical of the so-called Right Hand Path of Magic – and therefore limited. That which is shunned or forsaken by the so-called aspirant to the Mysteries is often the very thing which holds the coveted Key.

Abbé Boullan, during his Earth-life, understood this. His esoteric endeavors were always weighed against his role as confessor and priest. The controversial methods by which he sought to aid the afflicted were, none the less, meant to eliminate suffering and aid the human spirit in its path towards Godhead. For these efforts, the Catholic Church excommunicated him. Boullan went on, even through the gates of death, to serve Voodoo. He would reestablish contact with the human race through the medium, Michael Bertiaux, as he wrote the lessons supporting the Monastery of the Seven Rays.

This unique contact revealed several things. Boullan was no longer the flesh and blood priest of his bygone earth-days. Nor had he passed into oblivion. In the years between his final breath on our planet and his contact with the Monastery of the Seven Rays, Boullan had become: *the chief of all UFO research as well as all work in connection with other worlds*. He is identified with the: *Eastern Galaxy Temple which is located in the constellation of Alpha-Sagittarius, just beyond the physical Sagittarius, and situated in the Fourth Dimension.*

The Boullan Academy of Spiritual Service, formulated on the anniversary of the Abbe's death, established contact with this Spiritual Center through a series of celestial Gateways beginning with Arcturus. The details of this contact may be left for another work. We are concerned here with a particular development within what Michael Bertiaux calls the Aiwaz Physics.

Aiwass was the name of the entity who delivered to Aleister Crowley the revelation known as the *Book of the Law* or *Liber AL*. Not only did Crowley devote the majority of his life to the promulgation of this book and its message, but he also sought to understand the mystery of Aiwass. Crowley's view on the identity of Aiwass seems to have vacillated. At times, Crowley saw Aiwass as his own Holy Guardian Angel, a component of his transcendental and integrated consciousness. At other times, he would understand this being to be a wholly separate entity whose existence was independent of his own.

If the latter were true, many questions arise. Would Aiwass appear again? Is he, like all life, evolving and growing into something different?

Bertiaux would certainly answer in the affirmative to these queries. Establishing contact with this entity himself, he would spell its name AIWAZ, satisfying the need to express this power through his own unique gematria and magical current.

It was in conjunction with this current that the name morphed yet again, appearing in a simple vision as:

ALWAZ

This name immediately signified several things to us. Beginning with the revealed word AL, we find this name to be in harmony with the 93 Current. We also find it in harmony with the prophecy of AL 2:55, indicating the discovery of an English Qabala. This name begins and ends with the first and last letters of our English alphabet, the English equivalent of the Greek ALPHA and OMEGA whereby Christ is identified in *Revelation* 1:11 (see also *Liber AL* 1:48). This Christ will become the pivotal figure for us as the Western glyph identified by the African as the Lord of the Crossroads. The Legbha-Christ of Gnostic-Voudon we will find taking on a revelatory role as the central existential event of Tillichian Theology, a branch of ontology crucial to our cross-cultural creation of magical bridges. The central letter W, *Vau* in Hebrew, enumerates in Jewish Qabala as the number 6. This is also the centerpiece of the Boullan School's number mysticism, a mysticism which operates, in part, to serve the Incoming of the Æon of Ma'at, itself represented by this number (see *Maatian Inductions* from the *Voudon Gnostic Workbook* p.260).

Beyond all of this, we find the A and the Z, the Alpha and the Omega of this Sacred Name bookending the word:

LWA

We know the LWA (or LOA) are those Great Gods of Vudu whose complex familial relations form the web or matrix in which reality may arise. Legbha-Christ is the 'Spaciousness' whereby this web is spun. Upon it the Great Spider Loa operate, the Zaraguin Familie, patrons of the La Couleuvre Noire. In writings previously made available to the public, various aims of the Order LCN have been detailed but the goals and purpose of the Inner Sanctuary has been kept secret from all but Initiates of this realm. We may say that these goals involve the expanse of the World Web through means which are not openly welcomed in human society at this phase of evolution. There is no need for the reader to conjure images of wicked deeds and dark doings in conjunction with this statement. Our world does not recoil from such things and we find them both sanctioned and applauded by religion and government. We would do well to consider the powerful forces that would threaten the special interests of those who work against the human spirit through these institutions. These forces may be regarded as quite 'Evil' to the status quo. Blake offers a word to the wise when he states: *All is not Sin that Satan calls so*.

Ultimately, it is the LWA themselves who will initiate the student into this awareness. One must climb the mountain to attain the vision of the Other Side.

Working in conjunction with the LCN, OTOA is devoted to and serves these Spirits. Born in foreign lands (and, indeed, in distant star systems), their migration through the misfortunes of Diaspora readily adapted

to all the challenges of a new environment. Not only was the religious symbology of the oppressor assimilated but the esoteric currents running beneath and through that same society were swiftly encountered, forming a new arcane alliance. This is the essence of what we call Voudon-Gnosis.

Voodoo is perpetually hungry. It will consume its way through any condition with a terrifying tenacity and amazing artfulness. When Atlantis was submerged, the Illuminates, having formed their unbreakable bonds with the Prime Nexus Spirits, were relocated in Spacetime to continue the work. Dissolution of bodily form is not an existential issue for this Spiritual Genius. It is a fact of nature harnessed into an art and science. Following the path of nature, Voodoo not only eats, it excretes. Its outbreath sustains the world and within its Divine Body are found secret substances which trigger the Hot Points within the human form.

Following is one of the Boullan Academy Research papers. It is offered as an introduction to B.A.S.S. and also as an example of the highly syncretic nature of our work.

B.A.S.S. PAPER 6.444
Nemirion Numerix* & *The Road To Rigel

In connecting to Papa Lucien, our Inner Plane Patriarch of the LCN System, via the Medium of the Hand (as discussed in Bertiaux's *Grimoire Ghuedhe*), we find the following revealed to us:

1 The articulations of the fingers, numbered 15, resolve in the number 6 through Theosophical Reduction.

2 The 16th Power, located in the Center of the Hand, is where the NAIL was driven into the Christ-Palm. The Hebrew letter meaning nail is VAU and it is the 6th letter in that alphabet.

3 The number 6 is the basis of the system of English Gematria in which the English alphabet is enumerated in multiples of 6 (i.e. A = 6, B = 12, C = 18 and so on).

4 Via this System of Gematria, the six-sided form of the HEXAGON = 444

5 We, therefore find that 6=444 and these two numbers are significant power centers within the System. 444 is also the number of Jesus and YHShVH, as well as the Cross. Please see *The Grimoire Ghuedhe*'s *Temple of Methodology* (*VGW* p. 62–65) for the significance of this.

6 Papa Lucien explains that these Keys are provided in accord with the highly abstract and cosmic principles expressing themselves through these numbers. One may discover seemingly meaningful connections through the letter-number Systems of ANY Gematria but this is not how this system works. The system is linked to its own logic and philosophy. This logic is also an intelligent energy which communicates to human consciousness psychically. The system is meant to serve a connective function between the philosophical and psychical.

The Nemirion Race, as described in the *VGW*, is operating from the Star System of RIGEL which is the sixth brightest star in the sky. This same race has formed an interface with the human species via Nemirion Mind in Humanoid Form. We find a similar idea conveyed in Alice Bailey's *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*. The Nemirion Mind is uniquely Ma'atian, Ma'at being the Aeon signified by the number six. The bee and beehive are Ma'atian symbols which connect to the hexagonal structure of the beehive. This has been demonstrated to be the ideal storage unit for honey, the Sun elixir (and note that the Sun is assigned, via Traditional

Qabala, to Tiphereth, the sixth Sephiroth of the Tree).

1 The Entity called LAM is recognized in the Typhonian Order as the Gateway to the Aeon of Ma'at.

2 The Avatar of the Typhonian Order, Kenneth Grant, was known by his magical name, Aossik. In our EQ6, this = 444.

3 Just as A begins the system with the numerical value of 6, so 156 terminates the system with the letter Z. LAM, in EQ6 = 156. 156 is also the number of BABALON via the traditional Hebrew Gematria.

4 6 = Tiphereth (the Sun, the Holy Guardian Angel, the True Will)

5 156 = LAM/BABALON (Daath, the Abyss)

6 444 =JESUS who declares in the *Book of Revelation: I am the Alpha (A) and Omega (Z), the first and last, the beginning and end*. Via this Symbology, 6 (A) + 156(Z) = 444. Furthermore, LAM(156) + A(6) = LAMA, the Guru or Teacher – and the name by which Jesus was commonly addressed by his disciples was RABBI (Teacher). We will examine this further with a separate paper comparing 'Entity' and 'Event' in context of Nemirion Noesis and Tillichian Theologix.

Vudu Science provided, for Lucien, far more than is perceived in this primordial religion by the Western world. The deepest links to the furthest past provided the keys to forge the most advanced links to the distant future. When we think of communication with the Spirits, we find this to be an aspect of the Afro-Atlantean religion far more than the modern religious view of the Westerner. In fact, we find the more modern religions safeguard themselves against this tendency through doctrinal propositions which testify to total authority on all ontological matters. Simple reason and logic, however, show where such systems of theology are inept. If reason is meant to be a vehicle for the spiritual, this destruction of the latter by the former should sound an alarm. Spiritualistic Religion, on the other hand, is directly engaged with an organic process involving communicating intelligences within a developing scenario. This does not destroy religion but authoritarianism. We will also observe that authoritarianism destroys religion, even as it masquerades as the same. A major element in the Outer Mission of B.A.S.S. is the establishment and support of non-authoritarian religious and occult explorations as critical for the advancement, if not survival, of human society. This aspect to our activity is directly connected to the Idealism of the Abbé Boullan, which found expression in the Roman Catholic Church. As his idealism moved more deeply into the practicality of his active realism, the Church proved to be in opposition towards what it had proclaimed as its own Heart.

Boullan would continue his Path outside of this context, ultimately becoming Master of Extraterrestrial Communication. The Excommunicate became the Initiate.

The Gematria of EQ6 is the Gematria of the Star System RIGEL or the Nemirion Race. In accord with this, we have the Magical Computer of the six-sided die as extended into the English alphabet. This die is also the cube, the 3-Dimensional expression of the Liberation Symbol utilized by the Cube-Cult of the Monastery of the Seven Rays.

1 The Cube = Hexagon via the number six. Therefore the Cube is also expressed as the number 444.

2 The Cube, in terms of its die-expression, gives the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 = 21, the Key to the Hebrew Qabalah via the Machine of Tarot with its Keys numbered 0–21. This allows us to 'System Shift' and identify the connection, for example, be-

tween LAM (156 in EQ6) and BABALON (156 in Hebrew Gematria).

3 We find a definite Lattice between the Matrices of LAM and BABALON. This Lattice is evoked, not through systemic exclusivity, but CONSISTENT (i.e scientific) SYSTEMIC RELATION.

4 Ludwig Wittgenstein remarked that Philosophy consists of the ability to find connections.

5 Connections, as such, are not any arbitrary placement of one idea with another (as we witness in the amateur gematriatician) but are revealed as Lattice structures between the Philosophical and Psychical realms.

6 Wittgenstein became a 'Space-Loa' after his mortal death on the terrestrial plane. He is the Grand Patriarch of the Cube Cult in the Monastery with an extensive system of Hyper-Logic Avatars. The Magical Names of Boullan and Wittgenstein are revealed to an Inner Sanctuary whose dedication to their Schools is total.

There is an Occult School which functions as a type of Lattice – or Tunnel – between the Centers of Initiation overseen by Boullan and Wittgenstein. This School is in service to the OTOA-LCN and regarded as preliminary coursework into either Academy. Of course, either Academy represents a polarized service to the Nemirion Ray as it extends from RIGEL to EARTH.

Fraternally given,

ZETTELION

VI

It is our belief that one deeply immersed in the Traditionalism of any school may enter into a free communion with any other fellow human being. We have great respect for those who guard ancient fires with faithfulness and fidelity even as we travel with our hungry spirits, patchworking new form to accommodate the present time repast. We are often cautioned, learn the rules before you break them, but some of us are natural born rebels who can't countenance inspiration and insight being told how and when to makes its leap. Rebellion, however, is against bonds not the metal that made them. It is the need to assert Absolute Truth over Eternal Truth which destroys the possibility of communication. Again, we find a tremendous irony here: the desire for something all-encompassing only serves to limit and divide. It is the simple spirit of openness to the Light present in ALL things which allows the matrix of our individual consciousness to find a port of entry into another. In fact, this is the first step towards tapping our potential as Spiritualists.

I believe the human being craves Gnosis. Even those who feel that their faith in thus and such will be rewarded in the Hereafter have some driving desire to see the fulfillment of their belief. Scoffers and mockers retreat into the comfort of their cynicism lest there be acknowledged the possibility of a vision beyond the scope of the vegetable eye. The transformation of consciousness requisite for a direct encounter with Eternal Truth requires a new angling of perception. This process of opening generates further transformations within the body-mind. Buddhic consciousness, for example, evokes compassion as a natural outflow of its flowering. One isn't growing into a moral code, but

manifesting new values in dynamic interaction with experience. Thus the Sage is said to be inscrutable. There is more within his action than can be conceived of (or contained by) a mind expecting the Universal Life to run on a static schematic.

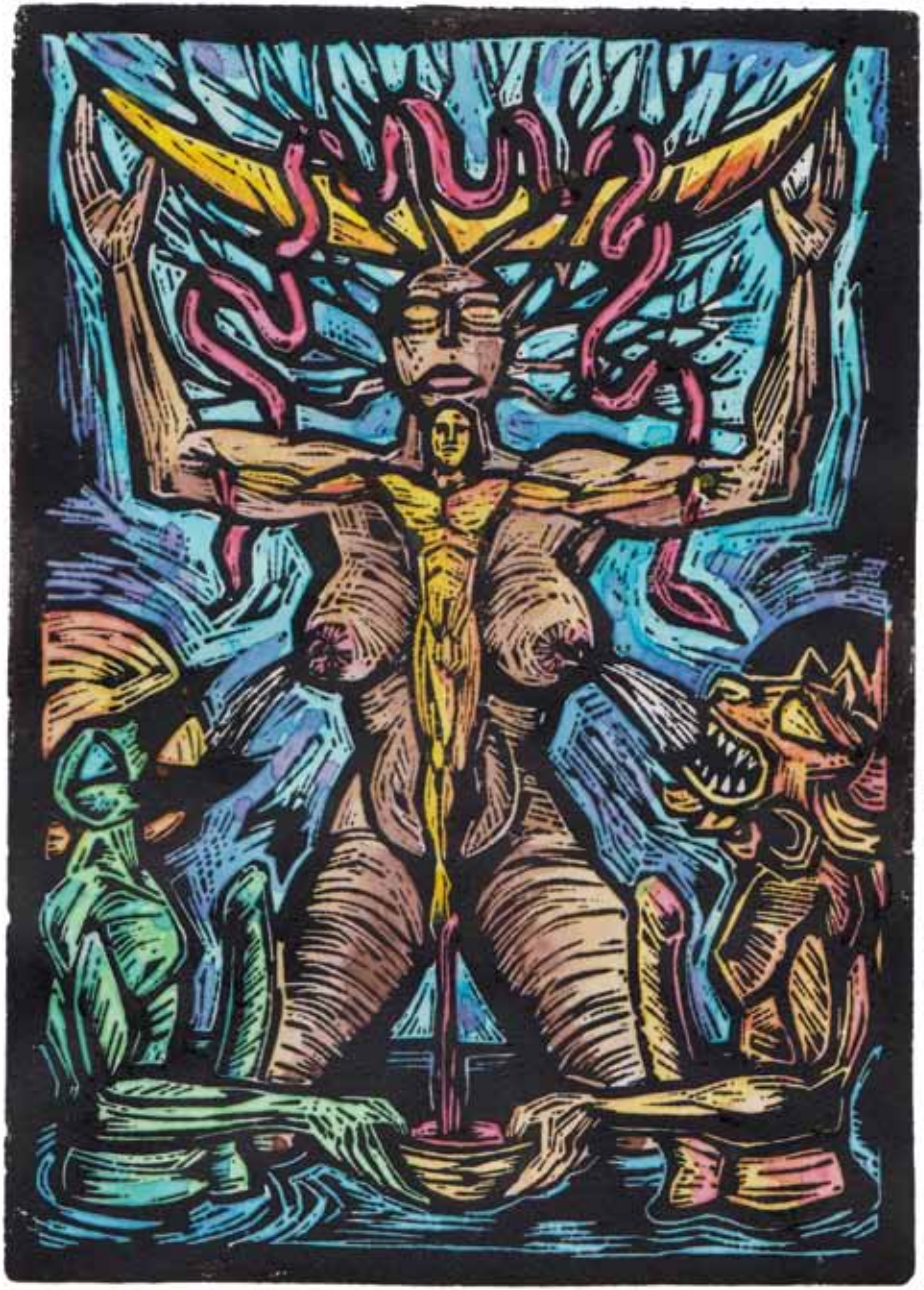
God is allowed to visit his Churches according to their theological rules and regulations. Seldom do we hear of an Angelic Avatar appearing during Sunday Service to correct erroneous views while bestowing divine empowerments. The Idea is erected above the Inspiration. Within Voodoo Cults, however, it is a matter of course, and an essential element of the engagement, that the Gods visit and operate on their own terms. This demands a tremendous flexibility on the part of the Magician who is rightly viewed in many Tarot packs as the dexterous Juggler. A type of contortionism is needed to twist through the tunnels opened by the ecstatic nature of Les Vudu. The sinews stretch and the joints find new freedom as the Absolute no longer binds the form. Truly, a fragment of the Eternal outweighs the whole of the Absolute, for the Absolute does not have any existence outside of the portioning mind. On the other hand, a grain of sand contains the Universe when viewed through the Third Eye. This is *La Prise Des Yeux*, Spirit-Sight. Adjusting the Mind's Eye via empowerment allows it to function with amazing aptitude. This activation magnetically draws the Spirits involved with this action. La Prise Des Yeux is not just ONE WAY OF SEEING but an entire system of functions. These are related to the powers of the Eye but are as varied as the possibilities of movement within the human body through space. Furthermore, this aptitude of Spirit-Sight is not simply an upgrade on the preexisting perceptive apparatus. It makes possible the transference of transformative and intelligent energy patterns.

As relevant to this Vudu Power, consider this passage from *The Gospel of Philip*:

It is impossible for anyone to see the everlasting reality and not become like it. The Truth is not realized like truth in this world: those who see the sky, the earth, or anything that exists, do not become what they see. But when you see something in this other space, you become it. If you know the Breath, you are the Breath. If you know the Christ, you become the Christ. If you see the Father, you are the Father. In this Temple Space you become all things, and you see yourself no more; and in that All-Other you become all things, and never cease to be yourself.

VII

The syncretism of our Orders is not meant to indicate a nonchalance with regards to either the forms or forces which inform them. We are neither Chaos Magicians nor adherents of one tradition above all others. Our experience tells us that the Loa behave as differently with all of us as we do with the wide spectrum of human encounters we have on a daily basis. Through this vast and crashing sea, we swim. The diversity of mind and method makes for each of us a unique, singular and growing religious experience. Freed of dogma, we may forge trade routes between our Universe and those of Others. This becomes a source of great gratitude as we mix and match the vehicles of Cosmic Light. Nor can we view any portion of this process as less than destiny. Think of it: every moment we shuttle into is backed by the totality of our life-karma, backed, in fact, by the life-karma of the Universe, of the totality of reality. But this is hardly deterministic. We possess choice, and this power rises from the same karma. Karma is not a machine but a mind, a soul breathed into a body.



The human being we identify as Abbé Joseph Antoine Boullan lived a life expressing a path of service to his fellow man and aspiration to the Divine. This simple course brought about much pain and sadness. But Boullan was truly laying up treasure in Heaven (which is to say, Space – the Spaciousness of reality – the body of Legbha). Our Karmas direct our encounter with tradition. They also cut a fingerprint precise path into those traditions. Those fingers form Mudras, 16 Luciens – known through 16 Gates.

Two Hundred and Fifty Six Portals exist within the human form, each one opened through the Great Facilitator, ESHU. These are the Gates to distant star systems and other realities. Yet they are as close as our hand and their initiations bring us more deeply into the spectrum of life. The most ancient and primordial of the African Religious and magical mind remains with us at the forefront of esoteric exploration and human development. That which has been put through the most fierce and vicious of trials remains undestroyed by fire and unburied by death, a glowing incandescent zombi form, ever present to link our temporal human experience to the Omnipresent God Mind. Through our myriads of methods, we are moving into this Grand Space. Through our communion with each other as voyagers in this space, we are revealing the ultra-potential of the total matrix whose basis is not absolute but Eternal.

ART

I *ESHU*

II *Formulation of Atua*

III *Visionary Portrait of Abbé Joseph Antoine Boullan with Rigelian Vudu Time Travel Marmas*

IV *Externalization of Nemirion Mind*

V *Union of Life*

IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

THE PETWO CULT OF THE DEAD, THE KlNGDOM OF BONES AND THE EUROPEAN MAGlCAL TRADlTION

Richard Ward

A PRELIMINARY NOTE ON LANGUAGE Haitian *Kreyol*, alternatively spelled *Kreyole* or *Creole* is the traditional language of Haitian *Vodou*. It is, broadly speaking, a patois incorporating words of African, French and Spanish origin. The majority of its words are of French derivation, but usually foreshortened to their basic phonetic constructs. *Kreyol* words within the text are given in italics, and using currently evolved spellings unless quoting other sources. It must also be borne in mind that *Kreyol* displays regional variations, and subsequently any spellings given may not be regarded as definitive.

THE LIVING TRADITION OF THE DEAD Haitian Vodou is a complex blend of many spiritual and magical traditions, but at the core of all rites, both within Africa and as carried by the Diaspora, are the concepts of ancestor veneration and animism. Thus not only is the inherent power of the religion manifested through working with ancestral spirits, but also reveals itself through the land and all the elements of nature which surround it. The *lwa* are omnipresent within the natural world in the manner of genius loci.[1] That is to say, that they may be contacted and venerated at places within the landscape that embodies their very nature and characteristics. This connection between humankind and the land is one understood by African and Haitian Vodou practitioners. Likewise, it forms a key part of the cunning tradition of my native Essex, where its magical ancestry still reside, imprinted within the land itself in non-corporeal form. The presence of Old George Pickinghill, the feared witch master who could stop farm machinery at a glance, still pervades Canewdon; the spirit of James 'Cunning' Murrell, famed for the ability to remove curses, still haunts the Hadleigh Downs. Just as the spirits of dead *'Oungans, Mambos or Bòkò*[2] are called on for magical aid in Haiti, the same is true within Vodou practice in any given locale.

Unlike Christianity and many of the major world religions which have sought to stamp out indigenous religious practices, Vodou has no such oppressive agenda. Roman Catholicism, West Indian and Amerindian lore, to name but a few, now sit alongside Vodou's African roots in harmonious partnership, despite the fact that Catholicism was a forced addition at the behest of the slaves' European masters. Vodou does not set itself boundaries, as no living tradition should. This is part of its natural growth wherever it is practiced, expanding and assimilating magical traditions wherever its seed falls.

As in Haiti and elsewhere, cultural conditions and social parameters colour the perception of the spirits. That said, wherever the Petwo lwa are called, they remain indicative of a spiritual and magical force born of a need to overthrow poverty and social oppression. Unlike the Rada[3] lwa, those of Petwo lineage retain ancestral fire and aggression at a greater level. This must be borne in mind when developing relationships with these spirits.

Central to the *kult des mortes*[4] within the Petwo rite are

the mysteries of the cemetery. The bone yard itself is a spiritual kingdom with its own hierarchy and spirits, its own laws and traditions, its own magic and sorcery. The cemetery becomes a magical space, a physical temple in which the spirits of the dead are called and magic worked. This is the Kingdom of Bones where the *gede*[5] are regarded as powerful in death as they were in life, for Vodou is eternal.

Whereas the powers of the dead can be harnessed in any cemetery, a regular place in which to practice is essential. Time must be spent with its indigenous and ancestral spirits, learning of its heritage and lore, interacting with its energies, and studying its flora and fauna before inviting the Petwo spirits. It is necessary to imprint one's own energies on the site and to absorb those from it, to establish one's self as a part of its psychic and magical structure in spiritual symbiosis.

The connection is then strengthened by the raising of an altar to the cemetery spirits in one's own personal magical space. This should take the form of a microcosm of the physical cemetery, and as well as icons and symbols pertinent to the lwa and other spirits worked with, should include a central cross. The magical and spiritual connection between the altar and the Kingdom of Bones is engendered by acquisition of items from the cemetery itself, beginning with a handful of earth from locations pertinent to the lwa worked with. These, along with other gifts from the world of spirit to which one may be guided whilst in the cemetery should be added to a spirit pot. This practice is akin to that of building a prenda within the ancestral rites of the Palo[6] traditions. In this manner, a *pwen*[7] is cast and remote connection to the cemetery is established. Each item taken must be paid for by way of offerings for the spirits, often monetary.

Each spirit must be fed as part of the building of a working relationship. Traditional offerings in Haiti for the Petwo lwa mainly consist of goats, pigs, and black cockerels or hens. I have found that certain substitutions are acceptable, although if the spirit demands a blood offering of some sort, this must be given in a manner agreed by both practitioner and spirit. Unlike many other Afro-centric traditions, water is not usually given for the Petwo spirits. Alcohol is prominently used, this being indicative of their fiery nature. Rum, Whisky, and Brandy are usually acceptable, depending on the wishes of the particular spirit. Tobacco, most often in the form of cigars is the other staple offering acceptable by many lwa, including those of the cemetery.

Only after such a solid foundation is engendered by communion with the spirits and a relationship is built, will they teach of their mysteries and magic. As within Haiti, this communion can take the form of possession.[8] I have also found it possible to learn from the Petwo spirits using various other techniques, including dream work and trance mediumship. The latter are excellent learning tools, being more controllable than full possession by the unpredictable Petwo spirits, but must by no means regarded as a complete substitute for it.

Inextricably linked with the rites of the cemetery dead are those of the plant kingdom, also paralleled within the European cunning tradition.[9] Traditionally in Vodou, this connection is exemplified by *Gwan Bwa d'Ilet*. Rigaud sees this lwa as a higher form of Legba,[10] emphasising his role as a gateway spirit. Although a Petwo lwa, he does not personally form part of the cemetery mysteries. Chiefly representing the occult power of the night time woods, he is also seen as the

lord of the island beneath the sea, the cosmic realm of the lwa Vodou dead. This is *Guinee*, the spiritual home of the African ancestral spirits. *Gwan Bwa* is death and regeneration, just like the Green Man of European folklore. The sexual connation of this aspect is contained within the double meaning of his name (*big wood*), the accepted slang for the penis in the bawdier side of Haitian folksong.

Haiti is my Guinee, the point of spiritual transmission[11] for the mysteries to which I have been called. This is where the root of the tree grows that now extends its branches to these fair shores.

OF RITES AND SPIRITS

Haitian tradition dictates that the spirits of the cemetery may be roughly divided into three classes, although the thin dividing lines are often blurred. The first is the cemetery elect, those who have rank, denoted by either an aristocratic or military title. The second are known as *lwa achetes*, sometimes collectively referred to as *baka*.[12] The third are merely regarded as *djab*,[13] and compose of a variety of other spirits, discarnate or evoked.

The first spirit to be called in respect of the cemetery mysteries is *Bawon Kalfu*.[14] As a lwa of the crossroads, he is seen as a form of Legba, sometimes referred to as Legba-Carrefour or Maitre Carrefour; Carrefour being derived from the French *quatre-forte* meaning four ways. Both Rada and Petwo rites always begin with the calling of a crossroads spirit to open the gateway between the material and spiritual worlds, but whereas the Rada Legba in Haiti has become the old man under a setting sun, Kalfu is the young man that opens that same gateway to the night. Entrance to the physical cemetery itself is always preceded by offerings of food, drink, cigars and coinage for Kalfu at the crossroads. From that point onward, the guardian having been paid, the practitioner is granted entry to the Kingdom of Bones.

Within the cemetery, Kalfu is attended by the prefix Bawon, signifying his importance and rank within the mysteries. Not only does he open the four cardinal points relating to the spiritual axis that permits entrance to the Kingdom of Bones, but also opens the paths to the points between. As noted by Deren in *Divine Horsemen*,[15] this is not always made clear, but betrayed in vevė, many of those for Kalfu displaying an eight armed cross at their centre. The points between represent the paths that allow creation of pwen. This is why Kalfu is considered a patron of magicians, master of charms and sorcery.

The master of all physical cemeteries on a spiritual and magical level is Bawon Samdi, chief of all gede. The corruption of the French word for Saturday seems logical, given that that day is governed by Saturn in the European tradition, and so associated with death. There is also a case to answer for it being originally derived from the Congolese *Nzambi*. Both the first burial and the large central cross of the cemetery are particularly sacred to Bawon Samdi. It is at this cross (often purposely erected within Haitian cemeteries) that he is called and offerings made. Bawon Samdi is closely associated with Bawon La Kwa (the Baron of the cross) and Bawon Simitytė (Baron of the cemetery). Opinion is divided on whether these lwa are merely aspects of Bawon Samdi or spirits in their own right. Metraux sees them as a largely inseparable triad,[16] whilst others, such as the authority quoted by Hurston,[17] make a clear differentiation between Bawon Samdi and Bawon

Simityė. The latter is attributed with his own vevė, showing like that of Kalfu, representation of the points between, the pwen on the cross, signifying the patronage of cemetery magic. All three Barons, whether as individuals or aspects of one lwa are patrons of magicians. Only with their cooperation can cemetery magic be successfully worked.

Brijit is the divine mother[18] of all gede and wife to Bawon Samdi. In Haiti, cemeteries most sacred to her are those in which the first burial was female. Her origin as a European spirit is relatively clear cut, being considered one of only a very small group of lwa that are of Caucasian appearance. There may well be an element of Catholic syncretism with Irish St. Bride, as well as that of the Celtic Brid or Brigitte who was a mother goddess. Her introduction to Haiti was probably through British or Irish plantation workers that venerated the saint, although her exact line of transmission remains unclear. Her subsequent connection to the cult of the dead may derive from her place in English fairy lore, where these spirits were seen as ancestral dead.[19] Rather than at a grave, Brijit is venerated at the foot of a tree within the cemetery, preferably an elm or willow. A simple altar of stones is erected, and here she is called and offerings made. St. Bride was said to have worked miracles within a sacred grove of oak trees that were once sacred to idol worship.[20] Deren places Brijit as part of the Rada rite,[21] but she is certainly Petwo also. The Celtic Brid was also seen as a goddess of fire, her rites celebrated at Beltane. The lwa Brijit is said to have given issue to a multitude of gede spirits by her husband, three of which are mentioned by Metraux.[22]

The list of the cemetery elect is not endless, although it is numerous; however most are merely regional forms or aspects of Bawon Samdi. Rigaud speaks of the twenty nine magical points of the cemetery, each represented by a gede spirit.[23] Two further Barons however, are particularly worthy of note. The first is Bawon Kriminal. Kriminal in essence, is the pure embodiment of the Petwo rite in its rawest form. His origins lie with Dom Pedro,[24] Petwo's own legendary founder. Pedro was referred to as Pedro Criminal by the French authorities due to his subversive tactics against them. As predominately a deification of Pedro himself, Kriminal is the ancestral core of the Petwo rite, and still containing all the fire, blood, and anger that freed Haiti from its foreign overlords. Possession by this lwa often results in bloodletting, although such wounds quickly heal and rarely scar. Metraux[25] speaks of the sacred object of Kriminal being the pince, an iron bar that is heated in a brazier as part of his rite. Similar rites are recorded among the fire ordeals of the so-called criminal societies of West Africa.[26] The inclusion of Kriminal as a Bawon of the cemetery in Haiti is relatively modern, largely due to his being embraced as the patron lwa of the ton-ton macoute under the Duvalier regime. Their brand of Vodou, *Petwo Sauvage* (*Wild Petro*), originally symbolic of the blood and fire of the revolution against tyranny, were for a time inverted and used as a method of oppression. Fear and control was instilled by threats of zombification, ritualised murder and a host of other sinister punishments centring on the cemetery.

Within the Petwo rite, Bawon Pikant opens the way to the plant kingdom within the physical cemetery. He is the link between both kingdoms, teaching the virtues of plants and barks, earth and bones. His vevė is similar to that of Legba, symbolising the gate, but with a secondary design showing his connection to the plant kingdom within the cemetery. The enclosure of the secondary vevė is that of the cemetery itself. The

sacred number three is also present, already shown to be a number associated with the Barons. Bawon Pikant has often been erroneously seen as merely a form of Bawon Simityė or Bawon La Kwa, but this is only true in the sense that all forms of the Bawon are a collective manifestation of the mysteries of death and resurrection.

Brize is chiefly a lwa of the countryside,[27] but is known in the cemetery as General Brize. He is a lwa who teaches the art of magical charms and treatments. These include wanga, those used to curse, and garde or paket, those used for healing or protection. To this end, his vevė contains an image of the serpent, symbol of magic and medicine in many cultures. It must be remembered that the Vodou mysteries of the dead are often referred to as the mysteries of sex and death, containing as they do, mastery of the complete cycle of procreation, conception, life, death, and rebirth.

Brize is often called upon to help remove curses, particularly that of the dreaded expeditions which will be dealt with later. As is the case with certain other lwa, talismanic stones[28] consecrated to Brize are used for protection during cemetery work. In addition to his vevė of calling, treatments under Brize's auspices are empowered through special vevė in the shape of a coffin. This is usually done prior to burial under the auspices of one of the forms of Bawon Samdi, most often Bawon Simityė.

The next tier of the cemetery spirits consists of the lwa achete, spirits who although are often given offerings in the usual manner, their services can also be bought purely with hard cash. That these spirits are considered evil is somewhat of a disservice. They are aggressive in nature, but their action is only at the behest of the one that calls them. These spirits are often referred to in Haiti as *baka*. Rigaud[29] sees them as descendants of the earth rites of the Carib Indians,[30] the term itself being similar to *bacab*, the elemental spirits of Yucatan, from which the Carib traditions are derived. Rigaud ignores another potential origin of these spirits, which bear similar characteristics to the bakulu, ancestral spirits of the dead in Congolese tradition.[31] Quite simply, and regardless of origin, these are spirits that embody the fire of Petwo in addition to the element of earth. These mysteries are much concerned with animal transformation as they confer the pwen of the *loop garou* (werewolf) and other animal forms, such as dogs, cats or birds. This form of Shamanic practice is common to both European and African traditions, as demonstrated by English witch's animal familiars and the leopard and baboon societies in Sierra Leone alike. The owl[32] is the symbol of various Petwo lwa, including both Brize and Marinette. The cemetery form of this spirit is Marinette bwa-chet, Marinette of the dry bones; symbolising her skeletal aspect. She is called among the trees on the edge of the cemetery. Her cultus outside of the cemetery mysteries is popular in much of Haiti. She is wife to Ti-Jean Pied-sec, the dry-footed one. His diminutive physical appearance is probably derived from that of a Congolese tree spirit. One of the chief forms of this spirit is Ti-Jean Petwo, seen as the ancestral son of Don Pedro himself. As earth deities, offerings to these lwa should always be buried, and so through them, the land itself is also fed. For many of the Petwo lwa, offerings are incinerated by fire prior to burial, according to the wishes of the spirit. These two elements of fire and earth symbolise the very nature of Petwo, indicative of its aggressive and seemingly chaotic nature. By contrast, the Rada rite most heavily embraces the elements of water and

air, a proportion of the spirits of earth and only a small proportion of fire spirits.

The final class of cemetery spirits are the djab. This most often refers to called or created lesser spirits whose presence is as a direct consequence of a magical act, the creation of a pwen. This is most usually achieved with the assistance of one of the Barons, or through Brijit if the spirit is female. However, to see these spirits merely as devils is somewhat a disservice, as they also include the multitude of gede, whether they be personal ancestors or just spirits of the interred dead. Whereas it is possible to establish working relationships with the lwa achete in the same manner as the major lwa, the nature of djab are different, the energy that powers them in the physical realm being of pure magic rather than devotional. Once they have served their purpose, they should be effectively released and any contracts made dissolved. To not do so will only place an immense burden on those who conjure them, as these spirits still require feeding like the major lwa themselves.

OF MAGIC AND SORCERY

In their broadest sense, the magical operations of the Kingdom of Bones are centred on the rites of necromancy and the lore of the plant kingdom, all engendered through the teaching and patronage of the cemetery spirits.

The plants and trees used in the English transmission of the mysteries are largely those attributed to the planet Saturn. These are those plants that are sacred to the indigenous ancestral spirits, and as such often aid communion within the Kingdom of Bones. Examples include Blackthorn, Elm, Mandrake and Yew. These are considered particularly effective when growing within the cemetery itself. All plants growing within the confines of the cemetery may be found useful when instructed by the spirits. Amongst these may be fungi, the humble toadstool, so bound up with demonic lore within the European folk traditions.[33] Each area sacred to the dead will have its own natural world of flora with which to charm, cure and curse. In the Kingdom of Bones, everything is poison, nothing is poison. All hinges on the action and direction of the pwen cast, whether it may be termed an act of good or evil. In Haiti, the dividing line is seen as one between magic and sorcery. If a spirit is used for healing and benevolent works, the act is seen as magic that yields to the will of God. To use a spirit for harm is viewed as sorcery, and seen as magic that *steals from God*.[34]

Often used individually or in conjunction with the flora of the cemetery, are elements from the grave. These include earth from the direct proximity of a burial (as distinct from cemetery earth), coffin nails and bones. The former is commonly known as goopher dust in American hoodoo tradition, where it is chiefly associated with cursing.[35] Hurston further notes with that *in nearly all of the killing ceremonies, the cemetery is used*.[36] By contrast, this substance can also be used in rites of protection. Seabrook gives examples of this,[37] including the fact that in Haiti, a farmer's field can be protected by a scattering of grave dirt upon it after a cross from the cemetery has been buried at its centre.

Graveyard dirt is also traditionally used to activate the spirits of the dead. After seeking the permission of Bawon Samdi, a spirit of the dead may be borrowed from the Kingdom of Bones to work magic or sorcery. The usual methodology involves calling the spirit into a bottle [38] or other suitable container where it is fixed by

a bone shaving or other power object from the grave, preferably from the corpse. This practice of obtaining a spirit is known as the taking of a *zombi astral*. The spirit is then fed in the usual manner, and activated by the ritual insertion of graveyard earth as this is said to be at one with the dead. The spirit is released within the Kingdom of Bones on completion of the work, where it is said to die a second time, and thereby proceed to its place in the ancestral cosmos under God.

Traditionally, upon death in Vodou the *ti bon ange*, or little soul, becomes part of the ancestral collective residing in the island beneath the sea, whilst the *gro bon ange*, or greater soul, of a person remains at the place of burial for a certain period. It is this that forms the spirit presence of the zombi astral. According to McAlister, there is an acceptance amongst Vodou practitioners in Haiti that their souls may well be called as zombis after physical death.[39] She also shows that this practice is something morally neutral rather than the evil it is often regarded in the West.

As Frisvold notes,[40] the calling of the spirits of the dead that are common to all rites of the African Diaspora are also paralleled within the Classical traditions of magic, with many formulae for the reanimating of corpses contained within the Greek Magical Papyri. This gave rise to occasional references within later grimoires, such as the rite forming the final section of the *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy* attributed to Agrippa.[41] Here, the spirits of the dead in churchyards are referred to as shadows, and called with the aid of new blood, bones of the dead, flesh, eggs, honey, and oils which are applied to the corpse.[42]

A similar use of grave dirt is recorded within the necromantic rites of the *Grand Grimoire*, where it is used in communicating with the spirits of the dead. Here it is sprinkled whilst asking the spirit of the dead from whose grave it has been taken to answer the questions of the necromancer.[43] Such cemetery rituals are however, a rare inclusion within the European grimoire tradition. The rite is repeated verbatim in the later *Dragon Rouge*,[44] a compilation largely drawn from the *Grand Grimoire* and other supplementary sources. Prior to this, the use of graveyard dirt was already established as part of European folk magical tradition.[45]

In parallel with their use in Haiti as fixing or cursing objects, coffin nails were also an established part of European magic, one such nail curse being found within the *Grimorium Verum*.[46] Like so much of the grimoire tradition in general, this practice probably originated in the Classical world where nail curses were often buried with a corpse.[47]

Within Haiti and elsewhere the dead are sometimes called by means of a spirit bell to establish contact. In this practice we find another parallel amongst the grimoire tradition. De Givry[48] gives one such example known as The Necromantic Bell of Girardius dating from 1730. As with most magical tools of the grimoires its manufacture is typically complex and quite unlike the simple versions used in Haiti. Common to both however, are the fact that they must undergo a period of burial in the cemetery itself prior to use. According to tradition, bones are left for around a year prior to disinterment to avoid the *kou' de le*, the bad air containing sickness and bad luck that comes if the tomb is opened to early.

The spirits of the dead can be used to heal or harm, although the emphasis within Haiti is often on the latter. A related form of sorcery to that of the *zombi astral* is that of *l'envoi des morts*, the sending of the dead. These rituals are often referred to as expeditions, after

Saint Expédit. Although syncretism[49] with the Catholic saints seems less widespread within Petwo rites than those of Rada, St. Expédit is associated with Bawon Samdi and Bawon La Kwa. The former is also sometimes syncretised with Saint Gerard.

An expedition is essentially a death curse, and begun with a Catholic liturgy for the saint ending with a call to the three paters.[50] In Catholic terminology, these refer to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; but in Vodou, also represent Bawons Samdi, La Kwa and Simityė. The prayer is carried out before an image of the saint that has been inverted to signify death. The sorcerer must then approach Bawon Samdi in the cemetery, giving offerings[51] and calling the spirit by three blows with the ritual machete or sword against the vertical stem of the cross, beginning with the left. A handful of earth is then taken from the grave of each person whose spirit the sorcerer wishes to send, this being sprinkled across, or thrown against the doorway of the intended victim. Once the dead have entered the body of the victim, illness and death usually follow.

Expeditions can be successfully treated against by the help of General Brize, using his stone talisman to bless the work. Here, certain gede spirits are also called to take back the spirit(s) of the dead. Once again, St. Expédit is called upon using various liturgies to reverse the curse. According to Haitian tradition, the victim then undergoes a bath of purification followed by anointing by the oil of magical lamps that had previously been burning around a new grave for the dead spirit dug at the foot of a banana tree. It is in this grave that a chicken is buried, it having previously been passed over the body of the victim and allowed to feast on grain positioned on certain parts of his body, thereby taking the expedition within the animal. According to Metraux,[52] the victim who has previously lain in the grave is replaced by the chicken which is buried alive. If the tree withers and dies, it is a sign that Bawon Samdi has granted the victim his life. The use of an animal to which a curse or malevolent spirit can be transferred is a familiar practice in many primitive religions. It is a rite used in the reversal of many forms of sympathetic magic.

Although not part of my personal practice, any account of cemetery sorcery would be incomplete without some mention of physical zombification, despite the fact that the myth has vastly outgrown the reality. Reports of this phenomenon reached the west in the early 20th century through works such as Seabrook's *Magic Island*. These accounts were rather sensational, and regarded zombis as the dead resurrected by sorcerers to be put to work in the cane fields. This is not only incorrect, as zombis are not dead in the physical sense; but also that in a country where labour is cheap, such action is not financially viable given the time consuming practices involved. This myth is continued by Hurston's account, which includes the first photograph of a supposed zombi.[53]

It was not until Davis' first study of the phenomenon appeared in 1986[54] that the truth became more widely known, closely followed by the more detailed *Passage of Darkness* in 1988. The victim is given a poison as powder that reaches the nervous system through the skin. As shown by Davis,[55] the effects of the zombi poison as a whole are similar to those of tetrodotoxin, one of its chief ingredients derived from various species of Puffer fish. These escalate to complete paralysis, although the victim remains conscious and with all mental faculties functioning. The victim is then buried alive and dug up a short time later.

The making of the zombi poison is a hit and miss affair. Sometimes the poison is too strong and kills outright, at other times it fails to work at all. Davis rightly points out the part played by cultural setting, intrinsically linked with that of magic, the unquantifiable factor that ensures success. As one of Davis' informants put it: *The powder is the support of the magic.*[56] One does not seem to correctly function without the other. This in some way accounts for the fact that certain ingredients in the powder have no discernible effect when viewed on a purely ethno-biological basis, but whose function is purely supernatural. Davis also stresses this in respect the mindset of the Haitian people regarding their fear of unnatural death, as part of the zombification ritual involves the capturing of the ti-bon-age of the victim, ensuring that the soul cannot enter the island beneath the sea and be at peace with the ancestors.

The ingredients of the poison given by Davis include a variety of animal and plant toxins, together with shavings of powdered human bone, often including that of a dead child. For this, Bawon Samdi must be placated, his permission having been sought before the zombification process can be commenced. Like many of the charms created as part of cemetery magic, the efficiency of the zombi powder is ensured by a period of burial within the grave. That of a dead magician or sorceress is considered particularly effective, drawing on their power in the afterlife.

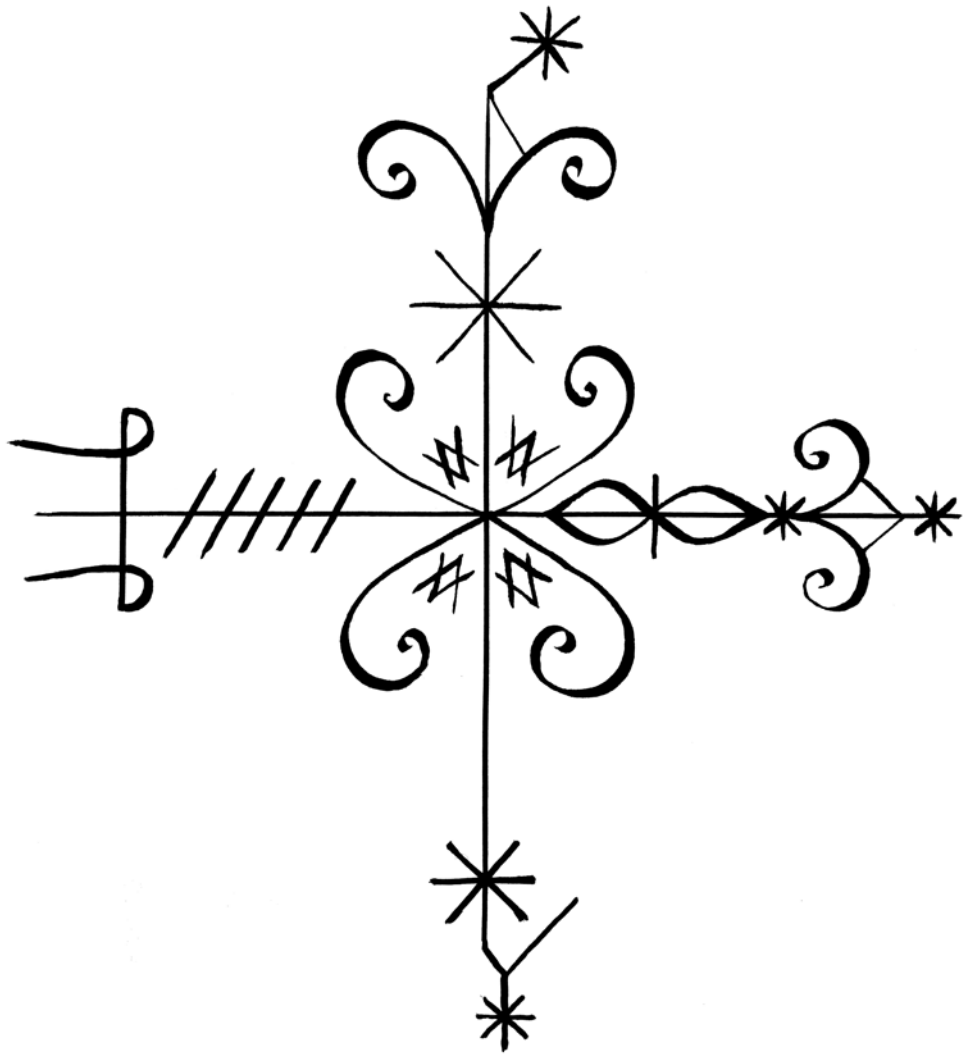
Whereas the ingredients of the powder itself display regional variations, those of the antidote which are always prepared at the same time are fairly consistent.[57] Although it is theoretically possible for someone who has been made a zombi to recover when given the antidote, there is still the effect of trauma to be considered. This coupled with the fact that the brain has been starved of oxygen during the period of burial mean that full recovery to a normal life is unlikely.

Physical zombification in Haiti is comparatively rare, despite its notoriety. Although used during the Duvalier regime as an instrument of fear and control, its traditional use is as a punishment for breach of secret Societe[58] protocol. This is only a last resort when the breach of the law is sufficiently severe.

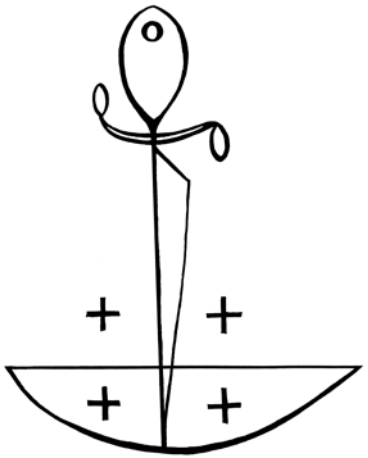
The precise role of Haitian secret societies remains a point of heated conjecture. Those in favour argue that the societies maintain law and order where the authorities fail to do so. This is certainly true, at least in part, as many areas of Haiti are still essentially lawless. Those against argue that the societies are merely abusing positions of power for their own ends. This may also be true in some cases, although the biggest abuser of power has always been a string of corrupt governments rather than the ordinary people. They have suffered much, sometimes their faith in the spirits is all they have left. It is such strength through adversity that keeps them alive. The fire of Petwo still burns, embracing those that feel its heat and answer its call, in Haiti and wherever else it is nurtured.

THE HERALDRY OF THE SPIRITS

Each vevè is a diagrammatic representation of the nature and properties of any given lwa. Vevè also signify the direction and appropriation of pwen given by the spirits. Having called upon any given cemetery lwa, the path of ingress from the spirit world is via the magical and physical interface of crossroads, cross, or tree. Within the natural world, these function in the same way as the *poto-mitan*[59] in vodou temple work. That energy is then channelled to manifestation through the vevè.



Bawon Kalfu



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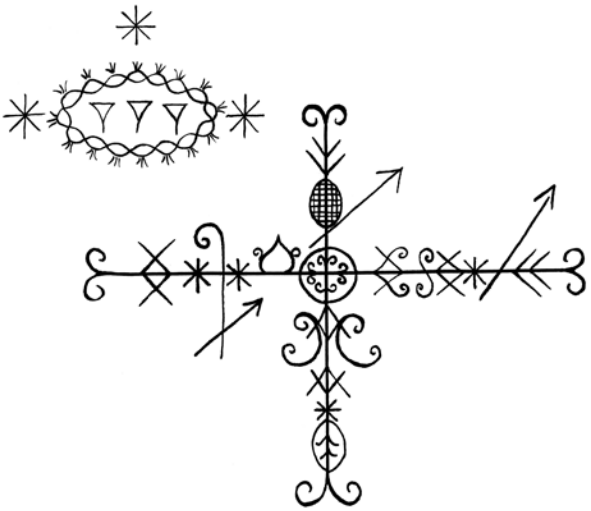
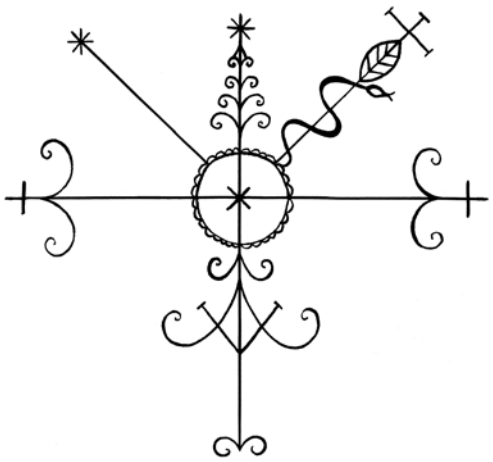
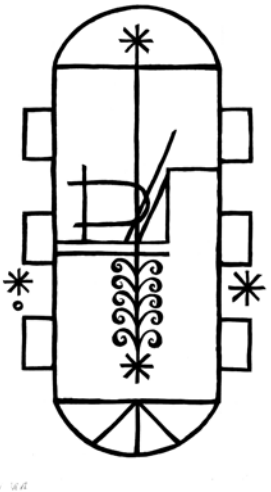


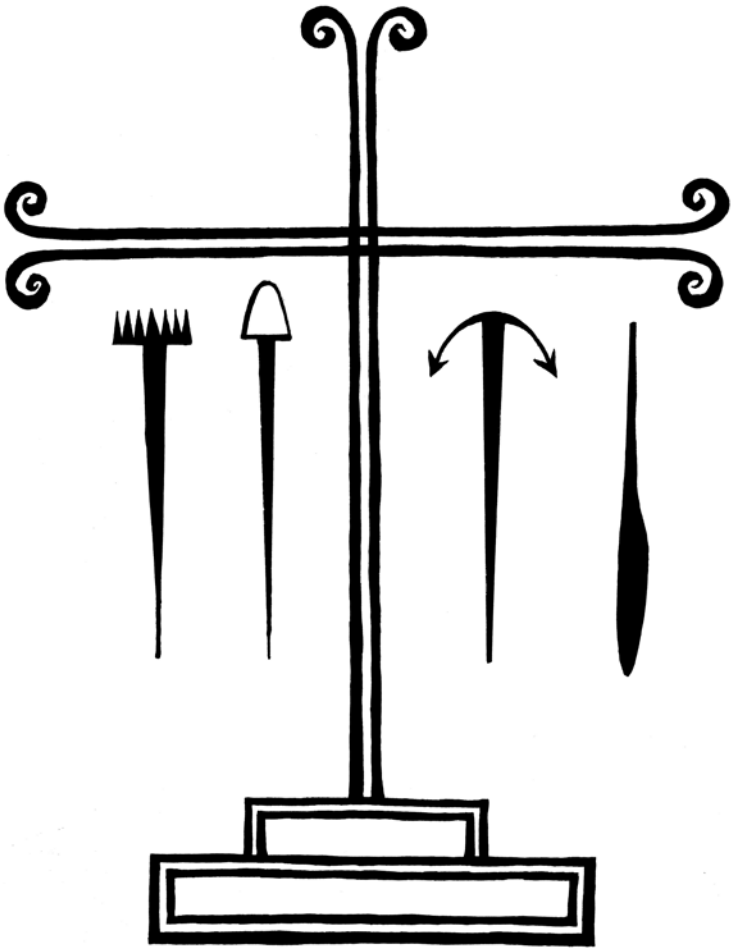
Bawon Pikant



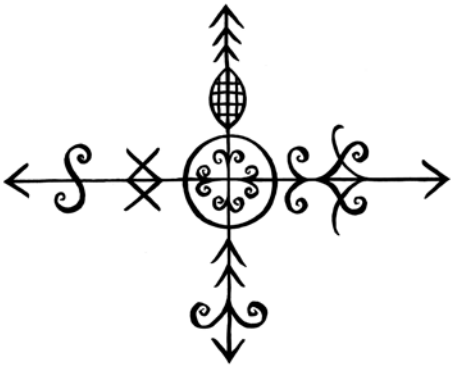
General Brize



Brize coffin vevė for magical treatments



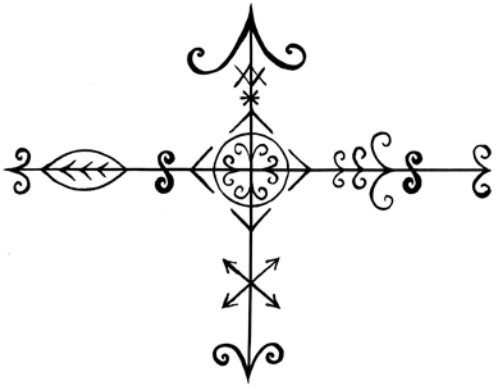
Bawon Samdi



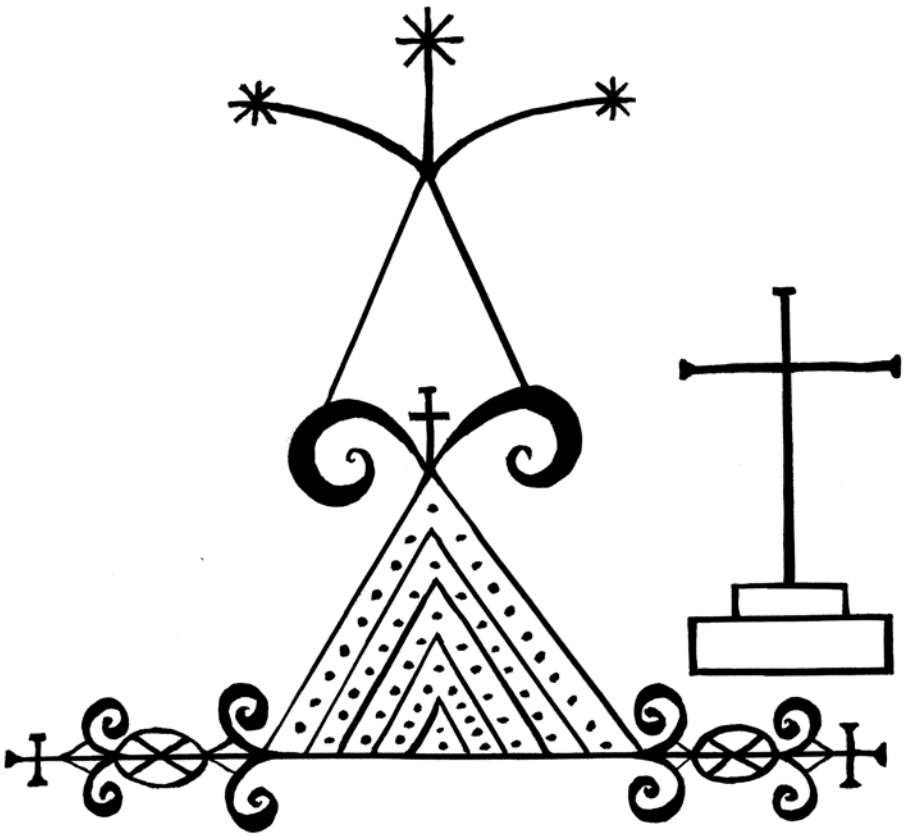
Marinette Bwa-Chet

Vevè traced around hole for burned offerings

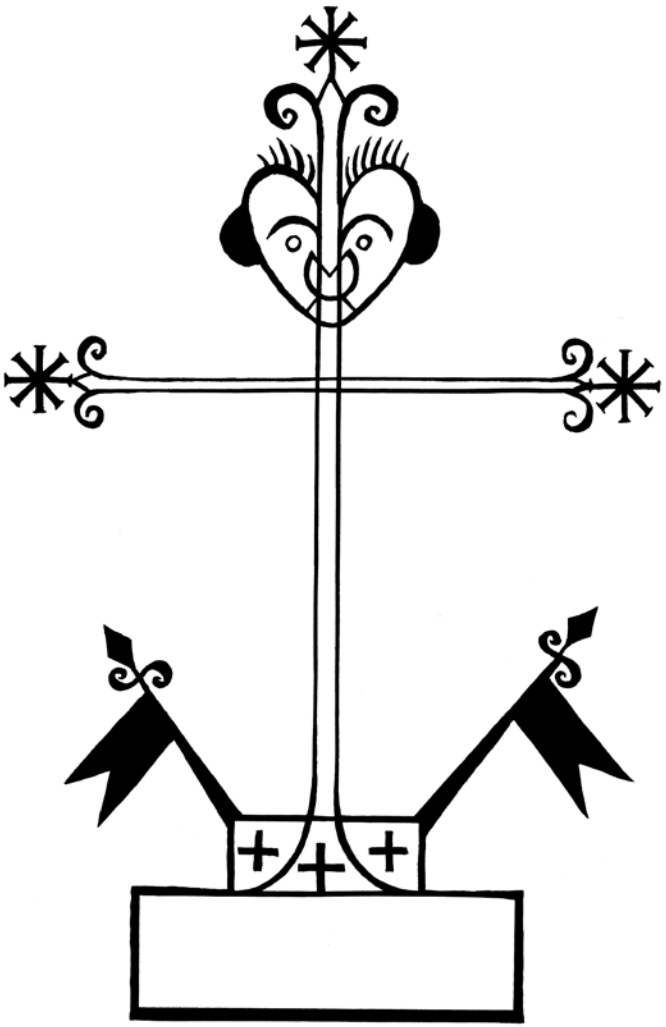
Gran Bwa d'Ilet



Ti Jean Petwo



Maman Brigitte



Bawon Simityė

APPENDIX:

Some Considerations on the Origins and Development of the Petwo Mysteries and the Cult of the Dead in Haiti

The Petwo rite of Vodou chiefly embodies the spirits and magical practices of the Congolese and those of neighbouring Angola, together with the traditional magical practices of the Haitian native tribes. The term Petwo itself is derivative of their originator 'Dom Pedro,' this epithet echoing the name of a line of Congolese kings.[60] Its spirits bear strong similarity to both Palo traditions (of Congolese origin) and those of Quimbanda (of Angolan origin). Despite such strong African origins, the cultus of the cemetery is something purely Haitian. It has no direct counterpart amongst the original tribal traditions of the Diaspora, having developed within the wider structure of Vodou within the Petwo rite.

The origins of the cult of the cemetery are partly derived from the magical practices of the indigenous Arawak Indians, together with those of the Caribs and Taino who later conquered them. Ancestral worship is common to both the African and the indigenous Indian traditions. Milo Rigaud[61] shows that the cult of the dead in Haiti owes much to the Arawak cult of Zemiism, further suggesting that derivations of the word *zemi*, (a fetish object relating to the dead, often an arrow or axe head) has given birth to the words zombi and Samdi. He further cites that neither Bawon Samdi nor any of the other elect spirits of the cemetery can be traced back to an African origin, although I regard this statement as far from definitive given the conflicting evidence. Rigaud also records the fact that the Arawaks and Caribs believed that the soul of a person could be stolen, the result being 'walking dead' analogous to the zombi of the cemetery mysteries. Davis[62] offers alternative derivations for zombi, from both the Congolese *nzambi* and the French *ombre* meaning *shadow*. Rigaud further reports that that the related word *zambo* means *a rustic clown*. This does shed light on the general character of the mysteries of the dead, the gede spirits being characterised by their lewd clownish behaviour. This is typified within the Haitian Rara festival with its emphasis on chaos and pandemonium, reminiscent of the Feast of Fools in European folk tradition. The importance of Rara with relation to the cemetery mysteries in Vodou will be returned to later.

The next major influence on the Petwo mysteries is distinctly French. From 1697 when the colony was conceded to the French by Spain, until 1804 when it achieved independence, Haiti was under French control. Even after that time, the French influence remained strong. Their legacy remains in architecture, and more importantly, in Kreyol, the very language of Vodou itself. French military and Freemasonic traditions were arguably significant influences within Petwo, it also being the prime candidate for the inclusion of ceremonial magic derived from the European grimoire tradition in other Haitian Vodou rites.

Freemasonry was introduced to Haiti and other parts of the West Indies by the French in the late 18th century, under the framework of the branch known as Martinism, after its founder Louis Claude de Saint-Martin.[63] Saint-Martin's teacher was one Don Martines de Pasqually,[64] whose own Rite of the Elect Priests now forms part of the wider framework of Martinist doctrine. He is first recorded in the annals of French Masonic history in 1754, and according to Waite, established a sovereign tribunal in Paris in 1767.[65] In 1772, Pasqually visited the Dominican Republic that borders

Haiti to receive an inheritance, also staying at both Leogane and Port au Prince in Haiti itself. He remained there until his death two years later, and during this time, his tradition began to slowly establish itself in the Caribbean. Like the man himself, the origins of Pasqually's rite are surrounded by conjecture. Waite is of the opinion that its predecessor was the Brethren of the Rosy Cross,[66] itself a body steeped in the traditions of practical magic.

Pasqually's Masonic rite belongs to the realm of esoteric Freemasonry, and involves contact with spirits through mediumship in a way which parallels the spiritualism of Allan Kardec that has had such a profound effect on the Brazilian magical traditions derived from the African Diaspora. Waite, as might be expected, points out that the spirit work of the Elect Priests: *was not one of communication with either good or evil spirits belonging to dubious hierarchies of occult literature and undertaken for the trumpery-if not evil-concerns with which we are all acquainted by the reports of grimoires and so-called Keys of Solomon.*[67] Even he has to concede however, that it is at least in part derived from the traditions of practical magic. Furthermore, with relation to the rites themselves he states: *We may draw circles and inscribe Divine names therein, may light ceremonial tapers and burn consecrated incense, may observe certain fasts and wear certain ritual clothing.*[68] Although the spirit communications of Pasqually are seen to this day as Christian angelic in conception, there is little difference between them and the basic methodology of the grimoire tradition.

What is certain is that French editions of the grimoires had begun to circulate in Haiti by the early nineteenth century. Jean Kerboull records many, including compilations of occult secrets such as *Le Petit Albert, Le Grand Albert, Poule Noire*, and other works of dubious attribution.[69] He goes on to hypothesize that the ritual diagrams and sigils in these works were also responsible for the development of vevè.[70] Likewise, the influence of the sigils of the *Grimorium Verum* on Brazilian Quimbanda has been shown by Jake Stratton-Kent.[71] Rigaud offers the alternative explanation that they are derived from Aztec traditions,[72] the Arawak being their descendants. The truth may never be known, and both may well be right. There are also the cosmological diagrams of the African Diaspora to be considered, particularly those of the Congolese. These are based around the symbols of the circle and the cross, both staple components within the construction of many vevè. Frisvold[73] also notes that the petroglyphs of the Taino may have had some influence on the vevè of Haitian Vodou and firmas, the ritual signatures of the spirits in Palo Mayombe.

Kerboull certainly makes a convincing case for the influence of the French grimoires within Vodou sorcery, citing many examples of spells clearly of French derivation that include petitions to both angels and demons.[74] Other examples he gives, such as parallels between the ring of Gyges[75] given in the *Petit Albert* and that of a string worn around the hand of a zombi is more tentative, but still may have some basis. Both being designed to produce invisibility.

Within Haiti, the cemetery mysteries are chiefly practiced under the auspices of secret societies whose traditions are more closely guarded than those of orthodox Vodou. Such societies have their roots within the tribal societies of southern and western Africa, whose structure has justifiably been compared to that of European Freemasonry.

It may be noted that such societies are open to both sexes (as are the Martinist degrees in Freemasonry),

and that the structure contains regal, political, and military elements, all arguably drawn originally from French tradition. European Freemasonry is arguably responsible for other elements of Society protocol, such as its secret handshakes by which members make themselves known to each other. There are also similarities between the ritual conversations undertaken by the Society initiate and his initiator which, like similar dialogues in Freemasonic ritual, are only understood through initiation. It is at this time also, that the initiate learns of the *madoul* (sacred coffin), the central icon of the *Bizango* and other secret societies. This icon is central to the cemetery mysteries, and often contains the bones of an important predecessor of the Society, who is given offerings and ritually communed with as part of rites such as the *Seance Ordinaire*.[76] The origins of this practice undoubtedly lie with the zemiism described by Rigaud, in which a container is used to house the bones of the ancestral dead.[77]

Despite such methods of concealment as ritual handshakes, passwords, and passports[78] that have the appearance of a crude form of Freemasonic charter, the societies do have a public face. This is displayed in Karnival, where the Rara bands take to the streets for the six weeks of the Spring Lenten festival. The chaotic sound of homemade instruments accompany a variety of colourful characters, many in animal form, often symbolising the baka and the transformative powers of the supernatural world in the Petwo rite. Other costumes depict various djab, such as the Lansetkod (rope throwers) who enact the capture of the unwary, recalling the Bizango practice of ensnaring via ropes made of human entrails. Various other characters, either from Haitian folklore or ancestral tradition also form part of Karnival. These street entertainments are characterized by lewdness and mockery, the staple characteristics of the gede in general.

Rara is in essence a religious and magical act whose work is centred on the cemetery. The bands themselves have hierarchies similar to those of the Bizango,[79] and there is little difference between Rara cemetery rites and those of the Bizango and other secret societies. Competition between bands is fierce and often spiritual traps are set to upset the actions of rival groups. Brooms are used to spiritually cleanse the routes taken in a manner akin to the use of the besom in European witchcraft, used around the same time of year as part of the traditional 'Spring clean.'

Rara shows the Petwo cemetery mysteries at their most publically overt, an intense and colourful celebration of life, sex, and death. This is the ever present cycle at the heart of Vodou.

Viv les morts!
Nous tout se yon-O divan Bondye!

ENDNOTES

1 Literally, *the spirit of a place*. This is also one of the accepted translations of the Fon word *lwa*.

2 Respectively, Priests, Priestesses, and Sorcerers.

3 Those spirits derived largely from the Dahomean tradition and named after the town of Arada in modern day Benin.

4 The cult of the dead.

5 A general term for the spirits of the dead.

6 The spiritual traditions of the Diaspora practiced in Cuba and parts of America derived from the Congolese.

7 These are the points of magical transmission within the Vodou mysteries, by whence any magical creation, whether ancestral working, fetish, or charm engendered by the practitioner is empowered to do its work. In essence, they represent the harnessing of the inherent power of world of spirit. These are often referred to in Petwo as *pwen cho*, or *hot points*, as they become active when agitated by fire. In short, they represent the energy of spirit harnessed by man.

8 Known as the *white darkness*, its onset characterised by a feeling of overshadowing from behind, together with a tingling at the nape of the neck, this being the point of entry for the spirit.

9 See *The Pleasure Garden of Shadows* p. 470 ff.

10 *Veve* p. 87.

11 I personally claim no formal initiation in Haitian Vodou, but gratefully acknowledge the wise council of two otherwise anonymous individuals. I extend to them my grateful thanks for their teaching born of their respective spiritual families in Jacmal and San Marc.

12 A general term for so called evil lwa, often appearing in animal form.

13 Devils.

14 The Kreyol rendering of Carrefour.

15 P. 301, note 28.

16 Metraux, *Voodoo* p.114

17 Hurston, *Voodoo Gods* 214–5.

18 Hence often known as Maman (Mother) Brijit.

19 See *British Fairy Origins* by Lewis Spence for a detailed study of this view.

20 *Saints and Their Symbols* p. 53.

21 *Divine Horsemen* p. 82.

22 General Baptiste-Trace who outlines the graves, General Fouille who digs them, and Ramasseur-de-Croix the collector of crosses. See p. 114.

23 See *Veve* p. 331.

24 Jean-Phillipe Pedro, born in 1768 in San Domingo, a Spaniard of African descent. Pedro was a key force in the slave revolts that led to Haiti's independence in 1804.

25 Metreaux, Voodoo p. 80–81.

26 *Unknown to the World – Haiti* p.215, c.f *West African Secret Societies* by F. Butt-Thompson.

27 The countryside persona of this spirit is often known as Brize Montagne, literally of the hills or mountains.

28 Similar to the "thunder stones" sacred to certain of the Rada lwa. In Haiti, these are usually primitive axe or arrow heads that contain ancestral power, the English equivalent being Neolithic flint tools.

29 Appendix B in Divine Horsemen p. 285-6.

30 One of the tribes living in Haiti at the time of European conquest.

31 Further weight to this argument is given by the fact that one of the most feared of these spirits of the woods is known as Bakulu-Baka.

32 Within certain tribes Western Equatorial Africa, the owl is seen as a bird of ill omen, perhaps in some way accounting for supposed evil nature of baka. See Frazer p.175 for example.

33 See *Plant Lore and Lyrics* p. 82ff.

34 See *Rara* p. 106.

35 See Hyatt volume 4 p. 3293ff for numerous examples.

36 *Mules and Men* p.281.

37 *The Magic Island* p.314–15. See also p.294 relating to a protective charm featuring a cemetery cross.

38 Frisvold demonstrates the antiquity of the practice of capturing spirits of the dead in bottles or similar containers within European magic, and its development within the

grimoire tradition through the *Testament of Solomon* and later derivative texts. See *Palo Mayombe* p.62.

39 *Rara* p.105.

40 See *Palo Mayombe* p. 57ff.

41 The attribution of this work to Agrippa is often regarded as spurious, although Skinner notes in his introduction that the work: *draws on Agrippa's Three Books of Occult Philosophy for its theoretical background.*

42 *The Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy* p. 70.

43 *The Grand Grimoire* p. 35.

44 *The Dragon Rouge* p. 55–6.

45 One example given by Shah records a Spanish witch as having *Cemetery Earth* and *Earth of Dead Bodies* in 1622. See *Occultism* p. 107.

46 *The True Grimoire* p. 93.

47 *Magica Heira* p.3.

48 *Witchcraft, Magic and Alchemy* p. 171–2

49 Syncretism also varies greatly in Haiti from region to region. Herskovits for example records St Anthony as being syncretised with Legba, Simbi, and Ti Jean Petwo respectively. See Herskovits p. 327–8.

50 See Metraux, *Voodoo* p. 274 for an example.

51 Metreaux is specific in specifying bananas and potatoes. See *Voodoo* p. 275.

52 Ibid p. 279–80.

53 Hurston, *Voodoo Gods* plate 18.

54 *The Serpent and the Rainbow*.

55 *Passage of Darkness* p. 154–5.

56 *Passage of Darkness* p. 122.

57 *Passage of Darkness* chapter 5.

58 Under various names, the most well-known being the Bizango, Chanpwèl (Sanpwèl) and Sect Rouge.

59 The central pillar representing the axis between the physical and spiritual worlds.

60 The fifth of which is mentioned by J.G. Frazer in *Native races of Africa and Madagascar* p. 144.

61 Rigaud, M; *Some Elements of Arawak, Carib, and Other Indian Cultures in Haitian Voudoun*; Appendix B in *Divine Horsemen – The Voodoo Gods of Haiti* by Maya Deren.

62 *Passage of Darkness* p. 57.

63 French philosopher and mystic, born in Amboise on the 18th January 1743.

64 Full name: Jacques de Livron Joachim de la Tour de la Casa Martinez de Pasqually.

65 *A New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry* volume 2, p.336.

66 *A New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry* volume 2, p.337.

67 Ibid p.337-8.

68 *A New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry*, volume 2, p.340.

69 As recorded by Jean Kerboull in *Voodoo and Magic Practices* p. 35.

70 Ibid p. 46.

71 See *The True Grimoire* p.219ff.

72 Rigaud, M; *Some Elements of Arawak, Carib, and Other Indian Cultures in Haitian Voudoun*; Appendix B in *Divine Horsemen*.

73 *Palo Mayombe* p.41.

74 *Voodoo and Magic Practices* p. 38–41.

75 Ibid p. 71.

76 See *Passage of Darkness* p. 256 forward.

77 See Rigaud, in Deren p. 278.

78 See plate 14 of *Voodoo in Haiti* by Alfred Metraux for an example.

79 See *Rara* p. 137–8.

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What do Crossroads represent to you? Wow! Outside of the names of many a popular tavern and New Age Self Help group? ... Obviously, crossroads are places where two roads form a cross and allow traffic to travel in four directions. (Some make a distinction between a masculine crossroad that forms a cross and female that forms a t-shape. I guess female crossroads also permit travel in four directions because you can back-peddle along the central axis.) When talking about crossroads metaphorically, the tendency is to think of them as places where liminal boundaries break down, confusion reigns, and there is no clear direction but at least four or more possibilities exist.

Two prevalent associations encountered are:

- A final resting place for suicides and executed criminals who are buried there to confuse their spirit's sense of direction should they wish to return home. (I guess that begs the assumption that either would wish to go back.)
- A place where one makes pacts with malevolent spirits, such as witches signing pacts with their devils.

Hence they are haunted places. Throughout Europe in bygone times crossroads were very dangerous since they were favorite ambush sites for highwaymen, given that a great number of prospective meal tickets would have to traverse them in their journeys. The same crossroads that gave the highwaymen such ample pickings in life often became their final resting-places. An interesting note here is that a common execution method dealt to highwaymen in Britain was to lock them in cages suspended from gallows near crossroads for them to starve to death. Their piteous moans and supplications could be heard by travelers on the roads. Audible after dark when one could not see the gallows, it is easy to imagine that their cries were interpreted as ghost wails and the crossroads acquired reputations as haunted places.

More subjectively I think any place can physically be described as a crossroad or juncture in our travels and perceptions and by extension where we have been and where we may go. We describe a location with two geographic coordinates, such as 73 W.59, 40 N. 46 to indicate New York City. That descriptor also implies 253 E 59, – 40 S. 46, giving us four numbers. When you think of place as being described by four coordinates that location becomes equally where you are, where you are not, where you are going and where you have been, a perfect crossroad. Any mundane location can be realized simultaneously in both positive and negative terms. That is a useful starting point for magical operations. The potential to move in relation to at least four points outside of the point I find myself at always exists. I suppose you could add to those coordinates others indicative of how much you rise up or sink down.

Stop. You've already wasted a lot of ink relating material our readers already know or could find in a split second. What does a crossroad mean to you?

Eric K. Lerner

ELEGGUA

PERSONALLY COMING TO TERMS WITH THE SANTERIA DEITY OF CROSSROADS

Doesn't literary convention require a setup of predetermined facts and mutually agreeable conventions as a starting point? Maybe it's a way for me as a writer to keep my emotions initially in check from overwhelming both the reader and myself.

My most visceral concept of a crossroad is the intersection formed at the corners of E. 10th Street and Avenue C in New York City. It is a location where I lived during a significant portion of my adult life and formed meaningful relationships with others and the world. It is also a place that recently became closed or died to me.

How did it die?

This past summer I visited. The purposes of the visit were many-fold. I felt I needed a vacation I wanted to go to New York to see old friends and try to drum up some business for myself as an artist. I also needed to acquire ingredients for Warriors I had agreed to make for a client. Where I live now it is very difficult to acquire materials for Santeria workings. Even though New York City's government has done a pretty thorough job of getting rid of poor people and their trappings (of which the Santeria religion is one) in Manhattan, it is still possible to travel to the outlying boroughs and find botanicas which sell the ingredients for Santeria rituals. Also, it was very close to the anniversary of my initiation as a Santeria priest that had taken place in Manhattan, and every year I liked to pay a visit to where it occurred.

So I arranged to stay with my old neighbor Manny for a few days. He's gotten on in years. He's in his mid-seventies. Back in the day for him he had been a quite celebrated dancer. Anyhow, he'd always been a really sweet guy and most agreeable host. He was high on the list of old friends whom I was looking forward to seeing and sharing time with. The visit began well enough. The first night I took Manny out to dinner at a café at the corner of 10th and B where I used to perform decades earlier. Strangely we were seated at precisely the place where the ad-hoc stage used to be and I had given many a show, a personal space-time juncture. Back in the day, you could walk by the café some nights, peer through the window and occasionally see nude rabble-rousing performance artists plying their crafts. Now you just see a bunch of kids who seem like Ronald and Nancy Reagan masqueraders contrasted with the crowds who used to show up there. Anyhow, it was one of the few places we could find now in the old hood, that had entrees around $20 a pop (far cry from the $1.75 bowls of chili they used to serve there) and one menu item soft enough for me to attempt chewing. I'd just had several more tooth extractions and my mouth really throbbed. We reminisced about some of our performance exploits, realizing that no one there gave a fuck about any of that stuff, probably regarding us as being the actual invaders of their space, but my stay in New York seemed to have begun well enough.

The next night Manny's arthritis acted up, and I agreed to fill in for him working the door for another friend (I'll be kind and keep her out of this piece) who was doing a Middle Eastern dance cabaret at a local sushi joint. I'd stuck in a partial denture plate to make myself presentable and popped a vicodin to make it bearable. Enjoyed the show and knocked back a few glasses of wine to celebrate with my friend afterward.

So I showed up back at Manny's, and he acted happy to see me. He asked about the show and pulled out a bottle of Prosecco. Soon he dug up the program for a

show he had been in for which Picasso had designed the costumes. There were some lovely Picasso drawings and photos of Manny cutting a strikingly different figure than he did in the present. I contemplated his face and tried to form the connection between the face in the photographs and the face I beheld. I thought about how the past overlays the present and how Renaissance artists measured the facial proportions of their sitters so they could forward a commission subject's features in time so that the figure in their painting would ultimately resemble their subjects when the paintings were finally completed. I felt safe that I was in a location where I could contemplate such things and find inspiration and ease in the moment. We drank more and talked about the types of shows we envisioned our friend doing in the future before deciding to it was time to turn in for the night.

I went downstairs and outside to smoke a cigarette and regarded the traffic light at 10th and C. The air had begun to cool and smelled clean. The moon shone full. Just beyond the traffic light toward 11th I could see orange cones linked by yellow police tape marking off the place where a teenager from Public Housing had been gunned down a couple days earlier. Such events were now out of character with the sanitized place. When I lived there, I doubt they would have even bothered to mark the location of a shooting like that. Heck, the body probably would have been stuck in a dumpster and been collected unnoticed. There was a strange serenity now, with hardly anyone else out on the street, but it was oddly sterile and glassy when juxtaposed with the pulsating atmosphere of the street I had once often walked. The stillness added to my languor, and I looked forward to sleeping.

When I came back upstairs, Manny stood naked in the middle of the living room, with some type of fur draped over one shoulder, near the couch where I thought I was going to sleep. My first thought was: *Oh Shit! Friends don't do this sort of thing. How can I politely not hurt his feelings.* My mouth throbbing again and a stomach churning with too much wine, antibiotics and painkillers made the prospect of just putting out and writing it off to having had one too many pretty unrealistic. But that wasn't the direction in which he was going.

Where do you think you are going? You're not staying here, he said. The voice was detached. His face had changed. His eyes had gone black and receded. The pale gray hue of the street light reflected on his sagging flesh reminded me of the skin tone of another much more comely dancer/assassin who stood naked in my own apartment in the reflected street lights from 10th street years earlier. *You need to leave now. Or I'm going to kill you. I don't care where you go. I need to be alone with my pain. This is my pain. This is my house*. I knew he wasn't joking. Over the years, I've dealt with people in the throws of schizophrenic and bipolar episodes, drug induced frenzies, you name it, and usually I could do a pretty good job of talking them down or at least consoling them. Manny's was a different state of mind, not even a trance possession seemed to fit, as I could feel no personality just the imminent cold and fatal threat to my being.

All I could say is, *Do you know what you are doing? You are never going to see me again ….*

A few minutes later, I was back facing 10th and C, the crossroad. I fumbled for my cell phone. Rain started falling softly. I called another old neighbor who lived in my former building, but the machine picked up. I saw the time displayed on the cell phone panel, 3:30 a.m. I lit another cigarette and started walking solemnly

to the crossroad. My shoulder bag cut into my shoulder, heavy with the clothes I thought I'd wear, books I'd bought during a day of shopping. I thought about my options, where to go. The bars would only be open another half hour and I'd taken out my denture an hour earlier, placed it in its container which I zipped up in my bag. My chances of making a hookup until morning and a time when I could reassess my options seemed remote and were not even pleasant. I didn't feel like making nice with anyone.

By the time I reached the crossroad, my arm was already raised and hailing a cab for Penn Station. I needed to rush through the flux and reach secure whereabouts. As I collapsed in the back seat of the cab, I felt the juncture of a long period of my life collapse and my mind flooded with a multitude of memories formed in that place. I nervously fiddled with my Santeria beads and mumbled a prayer song to Eleggua. I realized that I was never headed back here, back there to New York that had even an hour earlier seemed to still hold untold possibilities. I don't remember if this is a thought I formed then or later in retrospect, *Have werewolves been reported consistently among the denizens of crossroads?*

You mentioned another dancer/assassin?

Talk about dredging up memories of a place and characters there becoming linked in your mind by odd details. It was the color of the light on Manny's skin and the boy's, and being in a space that I thought was secure becoming inexplicably weird and violent that link the two.

This was around twenty-five or more years ago. It was another hot summer day changing into night. I'd just got back to my tiny 10th and C apartment with a wad of cash from a gig as a makeup artist. I was beat and didn't feel like going out so I ordered in a burrito platter. A half hour later there was a knock on my door. (Cultural note: Back in the day, no one in the Lower East Side had buzzers that worked, and if there was a working lock on the front door, anyone let anyone in.) There was a bright, blond blue eyed punk smiling with my order. I asked him how much. I think he said $8 or $12. I told him to wait a minute while I got the money and closed the door. When I opened the door again, there he was dancing in the hall, and not in the chaotic pogo manner you'd think given his physical demeanor. His arms were raised to meet those of an imaginary partner, his spine carefully arched, his head still and his feet made small intricate steps leading into pirouettes in the narrow hall. He seemed completely oblivious to where he was and charmed me through his refugee status from time. In spite of his shiny black clothes and spiky coiffeur his attitude mimicked a star from one of my mother's beloved 30's musicals. When his eyes finally met mine, I handed him a twenty and told him to keep the change. He smiled and asked if he could come back later. I was feeling pretty swell when I closed the door.

Come 3 o'clock in the morning someone's trying to kick in my door. *Hold on, hold on*, I yelled. I probably didn't even check the peep hole, just opened the door, and there was my dancer spattered with blood. He pushed past me. *Turn out the light. Turn out the light. See if anyone's following me…* I check the dim hall: *No one.*

Ok. Sit down. We have to be still. No one's following me. We gotta make sure no one's following me. He stood poised, cocking his head to listen. *That's good. We're good now.* He peeled off his shirt, revealing that beautiful marble skin reflecting opalescent gray of the street lamps from

outside. *Man, what a night! That fuckhead Richard wanted me to score for him. That prissy faggot painter always acting like he fucking owns me. But tonight I showed him.* He pulled out a folded switchblade and rested it on my kitchen sink. *You should have seen it,* he laughed. *I wish you were there and could have seen it. The look on his face when I cut his throat. Man, he was so surprised, his eyes bugged. He started grabbing at his neck, and his mouth just kept flapping open and shut like a fish gagging.* He smiled broadly, languidly, pulling down his pants. *Man, I felt like God. I felt like taking off my clothes right there and rubbing my dick in his stupid face. Tell him, see what you're missing now. I felt just like God.* Next went his shorts. *I wanted him to look at me and know I'm God.* He stood there, all marble skinned and shiny but for the black biker gloves, blood stained arms and socks, and seemed to admire his pose as though my eyes were mirrors in the dark. *Didn't do that shit. Didn't show him my stuff. I got smart. I'm real smart. I just rolled him. Took his wallet. Piece of shit faggot, thought he could tell me what to do. Took two hundred and forty dollars. Now I feel like God. I scored a bundle of dope and some coke. You think I look good. I know you do. You know I look good. You're seeing a man who feels like God … You fuck me good and I'll share some of this with you.*

Thinking now years later about what the boy said, Eleggua attacks the throat. Eleggua owns the crossroads and is embodied in moments when normal expectations get turned on their head. I just remembered the first time I saw Eleggua possess someone and dance. We were jammed in a tiny New York basement. During the drumming Eleggua mounted a wiry elderly black man. He wove rapidly among the dancers on just one foot the whole time, making intricate crossing gestures with his hands over people's feet, propelling the old man's body at acute angles. Yet all the time he maintained his balance. In a sense he resembled a human gyroscope. I think someone who has a single point of balance can achieve a greater arc of motion than one who has two. You learn that through yoga postures. Visually Eleggua's dance reminds me of the boy's because both were able to move very intricately in tight confines and through their movement seemed to open up space and time.

You're rambling a bit. Did you practice Santeria when you were living on 10th and C?

No. But in retrospect, there was a lot of Santeria going on there. Many of my neighbors were Puerto Rican and Cuban. I'd notice that they had Santos surrounded by flowers in their apartments. I found out years later after I'd been initiated into Santeria that the Jewish man who lived in the apartment directly above mine had become a babalawo. And a very close friend of mine with whom I shared many adventures played in a band that first played under the name Babalu, the Santeria deity associated with AIDS and contagious disease. In fact, I fronted their first gig. It's another bizarre story. My buddy knocked on my door and asked me if I wanted to see him play that night at a small club. I said sure, put me on the guest list. He explained that the club owner was so cheap that there was no guest list. But I could tag along in the van with the band and they'd just say I was roadie. Of course when I got in the van, the band sheepishly explained that their lead singer was AWOL and since I was a poet they figured that I wouldn't mind fronting for them that night. What the hell. I kept my back to the audience for the entire set and screamed my poems into the microphone. Apparently that made quite an impression on the audience and I somewhat

upstaged the rest of the band. I didn't get asked to become a permanent member. But the band became quite famous and somewhat notorious under a different name, and they used sigils that turned out to be exact representations of Palo glyphs in the graffiti they sprayed all over town. Now no one in the band had the slightest clue about Santeria or Palo. They used the name Babalu because of its kitsch association with Desi Arnaz and *I Love Lucy*. Their use of Palo glyphs was also accidental. But they were indelibly impressed in my mind way before I saw them being cast in gunpowder during Palo rituals. In another bit of irony, that band had a reputation for setting the clubs at which they played afire.

In Santeria, we have a saying that Eleggua gives an order tomorrow so that it can be understood yesterday.

10th and C has always been a very magical place for me where time never worked out linearly. In fact when I first started studying Santeria as a writer, I stopped in a botanica there to purchase a small San Lazaro statue (representing Babalu). I talked at length with the espiritista who owned it and discussed getting a reading from him that somehow we never managed to set up. He told me to quit wearing so much black, that I needed to wear white or at least light colors in order to attract more positive energies and spirits. Years later, a car at 10th and C. ran him down. During my last visit I saw once more that a vivid memorial graffiti mural of him there still endured. It's one of the few pieces of graffiti that survived the gentrification. He struck me as a gentle soul. I don't know how much longer that icon will last, even if it is still there. But places I believe maintain spiritual and psychological vibrations long after they manifest. I suppose even though it seems now that I will never pass that way there again I enter into that special crossroads through memory constantly.

You have not exactly defined what or who Eleggua is.

In the context of Santeria, which is the evolution of traditional beliefs of the slaves from Southwest Nigeria, Benin and Ghana in Cuba and the New World,[1] Eleggua is honored as the orisha who facilitates communication between the divine and human. He is also chief of another class of entities called ajogun who are agents of misfortune. In Santeria cosmogony, as I have been taught it, orisha may be translated to mean one who has passed through earth to enter heaven. Hence, orisha have had human existences, but they existed as dynamic forces prior to human incarnation. Any orisha can act as a direct and tangible manifestation of the divine. The Austrian artist Susanne Wenger who spent decades trying to revitalize Yoruba culture in Oshogbo argued that maybe the best translation for orisha is deity, and I tend to agree with that. My late padrino indicated that he had been taught that all orisha have undergone successive human incarnations through to the present, which may be part of the reason that there are so many conflicting narratives about their lives. Ajogun are maybe best thought of as the purely destructive spiritual agents. Eleggua is in a unique position of being both orisha and ajogun.

In Brazil, Eleggua as Exu is sometimes associated with the Christian Devil. That attribution does not really come into play in Santeria. Contrary to what you may have read we recognize a devil called Abita. Mythically she reminds me of Hecate, (who is significant here too in her association with crossroads and also suggests several specific avatars of Eleggua) in her manifestation as the malevolent mother of ghosts, but

Abita is purely evil. Although Abita is strongly linked with the number three, most elders do not describe her as appearing three faced but rather resembling a garish harpy like Lilith. We don't like to talk about her. (Six months ago I would not have named her, but I realized that you can read a complete treatise on her in Spanish on the Internet, so you might as well know with whom you may be dealing.) Babalawo, a class of priests who maintain detailed knowledge of the divination scripture at the heart of Santeria cosmogony, continue to maintain ritual knowledge of how to make her fetish and work with her. Some sources indicate that she has a maternal relationship with Eleggua. When Eleggua acts in a beneficent manner toward us, we feel that he is using the energy of God, Olodumare. When he acts destructively he uses energy from the Devil, Abita. Eleggua has contracts with both. Of course on reflection we might come to view so-called malevolent events to have been blessings that shaped our characters and opened up new possibilities and things we first thought of as blessings as being beginnings of disaster. Any junkie will tell you that the first time he felt dope kick in he thought he found heaven and was sure he could handle it.

Certainly I could write a vast number of words more on the points I just made, but I'd like to move this along. One thing I'd add is that Santeros use he and she interchangeably when referring to God Almighty and the Devil, and this I hope leads to the undoing of another myth about Eleggua: that he is solely male. Avatars like Aniki, Alayi Ibere Yeye, and Okuboro are always described as female and others like Alabwanna are alternately described as male and female. You are dealing with a dynamic that pre-dates humanity and human form. Saying that is male, or that is female is too much a simplification. The writer and Obatala priest John Mason indicates that Eleggua is thought of as male when his behavior is aggressive and female when her behavior is nurturing or passive. It is a distinction that can be applied to the avatar of any other orisha. They too pre-date human form. In regard to the phalli in depictions of Eleggua, yes, they indicate a voracious, essentially virile, sexual appetite. But especially when they appear at the crown of the head, they can also be thought of as antennæ, lightning rods, energy sensors.

There are innumerable avatars of Eleggua. The most common estimates I've encountered are 21, 101, 256 (corresponding to the number of odu in the Ifa corpus) and 512. As a bottom line, I doubt you are going to find more than a couple of authorities agree on any one list.

You're starting to ramble and digress again.

It is really nice when you have avatars like Oba Kere, Alaketu, Olusi, and Eshu Bi for whom you have clear historic documentation of their existences or an avatar specific to a well known divination verse. That just is not always the case.

Who's Eleggua?

Eleggua is simultaneously God's Fool and Magus. He enables, he divides, he stirs up trouble, he solves impossible situations to create a dozen more. His colors are red and black when they are not black and white. He eats rooster and chicks when he is not one of five and only five whom I've heard of who eat pigeon which otherwise none of them eat. He likes candy. He likes palm oil. He likes rum, just so long as he is not Afra

in which case he'll give you a burning rash if you give him rum. He whistles so you're not supposed to whistle around him. He makes people take their own lives. He takes peoples' lives. He gives them their own lives. He frees you from bondage so that you can be slave to something else. He reveals one secret so you can realize that there are 101 secrets behind that one. He's happiest dancing on one leg. His numbers are multiples of 3 and 7. But he owns Crossroads. Then he is associated with four, but hardly consistently. He rapes women, but sometimes he's a she, and she's a he, and s/he rapes men too. He's the tiniest voice that makes itself heard and a silence that explodes like a hydrogen bomb. He's a child. He's more ancient than anything recorded in human history.

The first Eleggua I received was Alabwanna. I always thought of him as being a handsome guy, given the face in the fetish my padrino made corresponded to my notion of what handsome is with kind of slanted eyes and an aquiline nose. And the answers he gives using an oracle of four pieces of coconut tend to be very direct and to the point when contrasted with the answers I see given by other avatars of Eleggua. Now, after years of reading books and hearing stories from other Santeros, I perceive effeminate qualities in that face. The Christian icon associated with Alabwanna is the one of Anima Sola, the Lonely Spirit in Purgatory, a woman. Alabwanna walks with spirits of the dead, especially lost ones. I did not initially conceive, nor have I ever asked, *Are you a he or a she?* Now I perceive some more effeminate qualities in the fetish's face. And what I once perceived as the head of a penis jutting out of its head has started to remind me more of a clitoris.

How do you make an Eleggua fetish?

Eleggua are fashioned in any of four external forms, a cement figurehead usually with cowries for eyes, nose and mouth, a conch shell filled with cement and with cowry features, a natural stone and a wooden sculpture. Oba Ecun (Celio Perez) lists:

1 small … stone
3 grains of paradise 'Guinea Peppers'
3 coins
1 piece silver
1 piece gold
1 piece of the shell of the sweet water turtle
21 kernels of roasted corn
1 piece of smoked fish
1 piece of smoked aguty (aka: *jutia* – a large rat indigenous to Cuba)
1 tablespoon of gravel from the riverside
1 tablespoon of gravel from the forest or woods
1 tablespoon of gravel from the seashore
1 tablespoon of gravel from the street that has four corners, crossroads
1 tablespoon of gravel from the backyard of the house of the Olocha (aka Santeria priest) that is making the Elewua (sic.)
1 tablespoon of gravel from the front door of the Olocha that is making the Elewua
7 herbs belonging to Elewua they must be chopped very fine (Most santeros I know use a combination of 21 herbs belonging to all major orisha)
1 piece of the Ache of the head (This is a combination of four herbs used in the initiation of a new priest and usually referred to as *Ashe de Santo*)[2]

These ingredients are placed inside the fetish and often a flattened nail, needles or red parrot feather protrudes from the crown. Typical additions to this list are hair and nail clippings from the person to whom the Eleggua is given, ground powder from 21 Palo sticks from Bakongo spiritual practices developed in Cuba, iron and copper and a dog's tooth. These vary according to the Santero's individual training and creative judgment. Specific paths of Eleggua take their own unique medicines in addition to these

Why do you make someone an Eleggua fetish?

Usually it is indicated by divination that someone needs to receive Eleggua. For this Santeros typically employ sixteen consecrated cowry shells, called diloggun, as well as a few other objects, to conduct oracular discourse. Priests usually employ Eleggua's shells when divining for clients. (In that Case of Eleggua, he possesses 21 cowry shells. Five remain unused and are thought to serve as witnesses to the reading. Other orisha typically have eighteen shells as part of their mysteries.) A reader begins by praying over these tools. The prayers are most often said in Luckumi (creolized Yoruba.) She always invokes God Almighty, deceased and living members of the priest's spiritual family, and orisha. She then asks for oracular pronouncements to aid the client's evolution, health, prosperity and general well being. Often offerings of cigar smoke, water and alcohol to Eleggua accompany prayer. Usually the client is asked to make a statement that she wishes to participate in a dialogue with the orisha of her own free will and is invited to hold the shells in her own hands briefly while meditating on her concerns. Then the priest casts the shells to indicate the first part of a composite *odu*. (Odu may be translated as *container of knowledge*. Odu are the fundaments of meaning in a reading.) Specific odu are indicated by the number of shells that fall with open mouths facing upward. Each number, one to sixteen, corresponds to a particular odu. The reader may begin to offer interpretation at this time, but a second casting determines a precise composite odu. They incorporate proverbs, mythological stories, divination verses, predictions, and recommended offerings. At this point in a consultation, most readers hand the client two small objects such as stones – one light and one dark – to shuffle between her hands. When one rests in each of the client's hands, the reader casts the shells one or two times to determine which hand to choose. A light colored object indicates good fortune and a dark one negative energy. Often readers make more precise determinations as to the type of energy by repeating this step with different pairs of objects until an exact cause is identified. The procedure is repeated to indicate what spiritual entities (either the dead or orisha) preside over a reading and what offerings are necessary. The order of these steps varies according to the individual priest's lineage teachings and subjective judgement. Additional odu may be cast in the course of the consultation, and the shuffling procedure is always repeated one more time in order to guarantee that the necessary dialogue is complete.

The indication that someone needs to receive an Eleggua occurs in odu that require an initiation called Warriors. Warriors are a quartet of orisha. In addition to Eleggua, these are Ogun, Ochosi and Osun. Ogun and Ochosi are represented by a pair of stones that are housed with metal tools placed inside an iron cauldron. And Osun is represented by the top of a metal staff with medicine inside, a rooster figure atop, which

is placed as a guardian near the client's front door. Some odu just indicate the receipt of a particular avatar of Eleggua apart from the warriors.

Practically speaking, some clients come to you seeking warriors because they feel they need the protection they provide in their lives or wish to progress in the religion. In that case it is up to the Santero's discretion whether she will employ the simpler oracle of obi which uses four pieces of coconut to determine if the initiatory receipt of warriors may proceed.

Can you give a particular precise example of why someone should receive warriors?

Yes. Be great for me if I could just leave the answer at that, but literary convention requires another story or two.

I'd begun doing astrology readings for Rosie years back. She always impressed me as being an especially honest, tenderhearted soul with a very sharp mind and ability to comprehend and identify the underlying spiritual connections that exist in the world. Over the years I have really come to love her and care a great deal for her family, and I found myself discussing my own religious practices with her. Life got pretty stressful for her. Her mother who had been aloof and extremely abusive toward her as a child passed away. She'd suffered a long bout with Alzheimers which made the possibility of Rosie and her patching things up impossible. An inheritance permitted Rosie and her husband Max to acquire a small farm in the mountains of West Virginia. Rosie's long lost brother, a chronic small -time criminal, who'd been written off as dead showed up with his autistic daughter. The daughter was named Janice after Rosie's mother, a very pretty, ginger head seven year old who resembled her namesake physically. Of course, the brother cried he had been left out of the will. Rosie and her husband Max agreed to take in him and Janice. Rosie certainly felt a need to come to terms with her family. Pretty soon Rosie's kids start complaining that their uncle kept sending them into town for constant purchases of cold medicine in addition to exhibiting abusive behavior. Turned out he was cooking up crystal meth in the basement. Max and Rosie told him he's out or they're calling the police. He split in the middle of the night leaving Janice behind … Try to explain to a school or social services how you suddenly have a seven year old kid with no birth certificate. She's family. She ran about the house day and night, thrusting her fists up and down, alternately screeching and commanding. *Winng better than head ache. Drop foot right. Janice drop foot right.* Rosie felt she was now living with a small incarnation of her mother and one who had an endless energy reserve. She longed for a moment that she could make sense of, or communicate with Janice, who would shake her head violently when Rosie tried to make eye contact. Plus, the one thing Janice could do was take apart computers, televisions, radios, iPhones, all without the benefit of tools, but such mechanical contrivances engaged her. At one point Rosie e-mailed me that the only time Janice is still is when her face *is about an inch from the television. She doesn't seem to be paying attention to the drama. She seems intent on deciphering some secret code emitted in the microsecond flashes of the image stream.* Rosie's horoscope was not looking especially promising. When Rosie wasn't trying to prevent Janice from taking apart something else or from slapping her children, she was immersed in books trying to learn as much as she could about the care of autistic children. Being able to glean informa-

tion online and possibly take part in some type of support network was not a very viable option since new computers tended to be quickly disassembled. Rosie began feeling that she'd inherited some type of cyborg that seemed to relate better to machines than humans, and all the time looking like Mom.

From my perspective, I felt like circumstances were beginning to necessitate action. I was deeply worried. I don't like interfering with anyone's life or telling someone that maybe she should consider commerce with ancient African deities. But just saying, *Gee, you're likely to experience significant trauma brought about by a young female family member plus experience a communications breakdown on July 29th*, and the like ceased to cut it. I felt too much like I was watching someone burn in a wrecked car in anticipation of finding out if human flesh smells like chicken or pork when it's cooked. I began discussing remedial steps that Santeria could offer with Rosie. Most of us only turn to Santeria when it seems our lives have reached critical junctures, and the junctures crack like thin ice. Her horoscope indicated that a big red letter day approached with a convergence of about ten potentially tragic cosmo-biological factors on the same day. That day arrived mid-dialogue. I suppose that Rosie could have made sure that everyone involved was in a straightjacket with constant medical supervision, but this is what happened.

The family dog recently had a litter. Somehow, Janice managed to hide all the puppies under the hood of Max's SUV. Of course, it was pouring rain and everyone was frantically looking for the puppies for four hours. Rosie's youngest son Tom was supposed to be watching little Janice, but his instinct to save the puppies took over. Finally when the dog frantically pawed the hood and barked, someone figured out to pop it, and at least the puppies were saved. Rosie doesn't recollect when the family realized that Janice too had gone missing. The family searched the farm well into the night. Rosie wrote:

I noticed that there was an old college dorm size refrigerator discarded by a broken wood fence. The sight immediately filled me with dread. It was so small, she couldn't have, I told myself. But I had to open it. There was no place else to look really. There she was, balled up, perfect and small, with a sweet little smile on her lips. I thought, thank God, she's just sleeping. I touched her. There was no response. She was just balled up and so cold. For a moment, God I hate myself for feeling this, I felt relieved …

Rather than just call the police, which maybe was something they should have done hours earlier, but how do you explain what Janice was doing there in the first place, Rosie and Max took Janice in the SUV to the local E.R. By the time the police were done asking each of the family in separate interrogations what happened, each had managed to tell a slightly different story. So I feel I'd like to add another story here to the mix. It's one version of how Eleggua came into being.

Okubere, the King, lived with his first wife Ananaki, happily for years. Yet they were unable to conceive an heir to the throne. And Okubere did not wish for another wife. So Ananaki filled with shame, feeling that she could bring no blessing of children to the royal house decided to disappear into the night so that her husband could pursue a new wife. She rested at the foot of a coconut tree. She cracked open a fallen coconut and drank its sweet juice before dozing. She awoke to hear a voice telling her that she had drunk from the fruit of a sacred palm and that through partaking of

the blood of the tree she was now fertile. The tree itself spoke. In return for this boon, she should bring her firstborn back to the foot of the tree three days after birth and leave an offering so that the child would be dedicated to the tree and his mystical twice royal lineage. Ananaki was overjoyed at the news and rushed home. She soon became pregnant and gave birth to Eleggua. Of course she forgot about the tree and making the offering. Everyone just adored the handsome new prince. One day he goes out playing in the bush and recovers a coconut from the tree. Now this is one special coconut, its eyes and mouth form a face that bear a striking resemblance to his, so he brings it home with him, a great new toy. Rolls it around his room a few times. Ends up resting behind his door and he forgets about it. A few days later, he drops dead. His room becomes a funeral chamber. Strange thing is, the room remains brightly illuminated, and every one searches for the light source. Turns out to be the coconut. This thing makes its own light. Now either Ananaki has an 'oh shit' moment or the king's diviners remind her of her promise to the tree. (In a lot of divination verses you get a swell number of refrains to remind you how wise diviners are, so it kind of depends on who is telling the story whether the realization of the forgotten promise comes from Ananaki or the diviners.) The coconut becomes an effigy for Eleggua until it rots, and then it is replaced by a similar looking stone which receives tributes to Eleggua.

The coconut/stone was the image of a dead child and became a fetish by which his memory was kept alive. I guess Janice's tragedy reminded me. There is a Yoruba saying: *Do not covet beauty on the face of a dead child.*

Are you going to get around to telling about the process of you making an Eleggua for Rosie?

Rosie found herself facing the prospect of both criminal charges and a lawsuit from her brother. We had already determined through another divination that Warriors would deliver her from this awful situation. It was now time to determine which avatar of Eleggua was best suited to help. If her circumstances were less grave, I may have been inclined to go with a generic Eleggua.

Anyhow, I cast Eleggua's shells specifically to get a reading on what path to take. The odu that came up was Osa Meji, which is 9, 9. Among its proverbs are: *Your best friend is your worst enemy,* and, interestingly: *A friend who kills a friend, or a brother who kills a brother, cannot be pardoned; his crimes will not be forgotten.*[3] Given the role her brother and mother played, setting the tragic series of events in motion, the second proverb especially rung true. The orientation of the odu promised justice and triumph over adversity for Rosie. Orisha associated with this odu, include Oya, Yemaya, Aganju and especially Obatala. Perhaps, especially relevant for Rosie as a mother, this is the odu in which Yemaya, the holy mother, receives her crown. However, the best-known stories in the corpus deal with the misadventures of Obatala. Both seemed relevant to Rosie's situation.

In the first, Obatala sets out to visit Shango, against the advice of diviners, so great is his desire to visit his friend. He makes precautionary sacrifices but knows the journey will be hard. On the road he encounters Eleggua who asks him to help carry a load. Being an obliging sort, Obatala agrees to aid the vagabond of the road. Eleggua hands Obatala a large container of palm oil (which is taboo for Obatala) and spills it on

him. So Obatala goes to bathe and clean his white garments. During his bath, he sees a fine specimen of a horse running amok, and recognizes it as belonging to Shango. So he leaps into action buck naked and tries to reign in the horse. Well Shango's guards find him doing this and conclude that this insane old vagrant is a horse thief and toss him in jail. Obatala says nothing to correct their misassumption and languishes in prison. During this time, Shango's kingdom goes to hell in a handcart, births of monster babies, drought, famine, the whole nine yards. So he calls in his diviners to find out why this is going on, and they tell him that there is an old man in his dungeon whom he'd better check out. Shango is mortified to discover that his own police force have unjustly imprisoned his friend, a deity of high morals no less. Obatala is finally vindicated. Order is restored to Shango's kingdom.

The other story tells of a war between Obatala and witches, who are associated with angry ancestral mothers and all sorts of subconscious malevolent deeds. (It's important to note that witches in both Yoruba culture and Santeria don't carry the connotation of being wise women that they do in the West. Wise women are accorded status as elders, diviners and priests proper. Witches are thought to be people who unconsciously bring about havoc. Guilt is a fact of birth, a predetermined proclivity that the individual must come to terms with in this incarnation through social sanction or punishment so that they can evolve in a following lifetime.) The witches initiate a blitzkrieg against all vegetation to make curative medicines and nutrition impossible. But they cannot destroy cotton, since Obatala has made a sacred protective pact with that plant. Given that they cannot realize complete devastation they crumple under the weight of failure. The substance of Obatala's white cloth ensures the continuity of existence.

Both these stories play roles in the unique medicines and appearances of the rather curious avatars of Eleggua born in Osa and its various composite odu. Most of them are Janus-faced or are accompanied by Janus-faced dolls, permitting the Eleggua to see dangers both forward and behind.

Her Eleggua had to be carved of wood. This was a daunting challenge for me. I study and practice two dimensional art. I simply feel that I'm a geriatric art student. Whatever professional success or recognition I encounter, I quickly lose interest in the last thing I have finished and am convinced that I can make something better next time. My recent studies include making woodcut prints, which has given me some dexterity with woodcutting tools and an appreciation for subtle patterns of grain that significantly contribute to generating an image. But I am not a true sculptor and power tools especially terrify me since I nearly lost a hand in a nasty accident with sheet copper last year. So there was an immediate knee jerk reaction of *Oh no. What have I gotten myself into now?* Of course any diviner will tell you that there is always as great a message for the diviner himself as there is for his client. I suppose that in some ways that this Eleggua cried out to be made in order for me to evolve in my handling of wood.

I decided it would be necessary to find a piece of wood that already had indication of faces present. The search took quite a while. Eventually I found a branch stump on a soursop tree (Interestingly soursop is among Obatala's favorite foods, and many of the medicines for this Eleggua are unique to Obatala) that had an obvious face reminiscent of Munch's *Scream* in it. So I gave the tree three cigarettes, some coins, and pro-

ceeded to saw off the piece. I know that in European esotericism, for instance when working runes, it is necessary for the magus to cut his hand and place his wound over the tree's, thus creating a blood bond between him and the tree. The thought crossed my mind but my status as a Santeria priest makes any rending of my own flesh taboo. Also given my painful experience with the copper, I wasn't anxious to find myself lamed up for another three months.

Being carved of wood places this Eleggua in a unique category called Eshu Ere. I came across some interesting comments about making Ere (a sacred carving) from Wenger, about her process, in a book by Ulli Beier.

The traditional priest building his ibo packs his small bundle of mud with magic forces; Susanne Wenger tries instead to substitute for these forces images of the deities that represent these forces…

You could say that we must define the same forces that the 200 plants supply, directed from the reservoir of the universe through our artistic impetus. We have to achieve the same result, without the diversion through the plant…

We are not simply producing an allegory of ibo [a magic cult object] force. The dynamic forces of the gods could be contained into the ibo but they can be activated though artistic creation. Art is the only possible equivalent of ritual. In our work we must replace the 200 leaves with 200 thoughts or 200 emotions.[4]

I am perceived as both a priest and an artist. In the past Rosie had commissioned paintings from me. As a priest, I recognize a commitment to follow preestablished dogma in terms of meeting the medicinal requirements of a 'sacred' object. The medicines themselves suggest expressive, although hidden, potentialities for the types of energy with which they are imbued. At the same time, the purely creative impulse governs the perception and reality of the object for the client and myself. Would she really choose me as opposed to a number of other priests to make her fetish if I did not demonstrate a unique sensibility as an artist?

After struggling with its outward form, I decided to give Rosie a choice between the figure I made and one I purchased from a professional carver. I was happy that she chose mine not knowing which one I carved.

Next came the issue of loading the fetish with medicine. As I indicated, many of these are related to Obatala but also Rosie's own situation.

Here is a short list with notations of some of the less standard ingredients in Rosie's Eleggua:

• Bird feathers. In Santeria birds are the physical forms assumed by witches. Witches are ancestral mothers. Rosie's mother and the highly dysfunctional relationship they shared set the chain of events in motion that motivated Rosie to seek the protection of a foreign religion. Also, in many of the readings I did for her there were significant indications that she had been formally cursed by magic practitioners with whom she met during her pursuit of spiritual knowledge. The feathers represent slaughtered birds and confer protection against the work of witches.

• Possum bone. Virtually all Elegguas contain jutia (a type of large rat indigenous to Cuba,) but in addition this one took possum, which is classed as a marsupial and not a rodent although it resembles a big rat. Marsupials physically carry their young around with them. Rosie prioritized the protection of her children

and even tried to nurture her brother's aberrant offspring. Hence, she carries around children with her like a possum mother. (Surprisingly this proved the most difficult ingredient for me to obtain. I ordered a number of skulls from Internet sources, but almost always they turned out to be woodchucks, rabbits rats, or unidentifiable. I joked with Rosie that, *isn't possum supposed to be a menu item in West Virginia?* Finally, I came across a road-kill possum at a crossroad. I decided to let the flesh naturally slough from the bone, documenting the process through photography – ever the perverse aesthete – but at least I'm sure it's possum.

• Human bone. In the old days, you just dug up an abandoned grave and negotiated through a bottle of rum, rooster and oracle with the inhabitant to see if it was ok to use his bones. Nowadays, Santeros and Paleros use two primary souces: Mexican drug gangs and Museum and Medical suppliers. I decided on the later. Most of these bones come from either India or China. You can tell them apart quickly. The bones from India are slightly charred, their original owners having been cremated according to Hindu ritual. In the case of China, they come from those executed as criminals. What qualifies as a criminal in China may not warrant such a definition in the reader's mind. Although this information may prove useful for those of you looking to make a Hand of Glory. Who says Santeros have become the most flagrant examples of free market bandits? Not only do the Chinese charge the victim's family for the bullet used in the execution, but they merchant the executed's body parts to the West. Anyhow, when I got the bones, they were obviously of the Chinese variety and I felt a knee-jerk shame in seeing how small they were, obviously belonging to a diminutive woman. Not only did this echo little Janice in my mind, but I could not help thinking, did somehow the decision to make this Eleggua lead to this poor woman's demise? After all, Eleggua gives an order tomorrow so that it can be heard yesterday. I still feel nausea and the onset of tears thinking about this. Like Wenger said, there's always the prospect of 200 emotions forming the substance of any authentic ritual work (or work of art.) One thing I've learned, you never really know ahead of time from what angle a particular emotion is going to hit you during the process, even if you're making a two faced Eleggua who's suppose to see things from all perspectives.

That's all you are going to say about the creative and ritual process with Rosie's Eleggua?

I've already said that many of the specific medicines related to Obatala as well as Eleggua. Also, I think I gave the reader a pretty good idea of what many of the ingredients were through a recipe for making an Eleggua from a creditable source. I don't think people are reading this piece to learn how to bore a hole in a piece of wood so that it can hold a parcel of ritual medicines. Nor do I think they could be all that interested in what brand of epoxy compound I used to seal in the medicine, although I'll probably end up sharing that information with some artist friends.

But come to think of it, there is one important point to discuss in the preparation of Rosie's or any Eleggua which goes back to concerns about the power of ritual vs. art. That relates to the stone and the relative value of the stone versus the external form of the Eleggua. Recently I visited an elder, and he happened to be working an Eleggua for a client. He was in the

final stages making a 21 herb *omiero* (herbal water) to bathe the Eleggua. He was now just adding the honey, rum, jutia, guinea peppers, etc. to the infusion. He asked me and another priest to join him in some songs to Eleggua while he was doing so. Afterwards, he reflected: *You know the only thing that is really important in making an Eleggua is choosing the right stone. The stone is really what is the living Eleggua, nothing else. All the rest is window dressing.* His statement relates back to the myth I related earlier of how the stone became the substitute for the dead prince. But honestly I was a little surprised to hear him say this. He was and is known to be a stickler for ingredients. He once criticized the way my late padrino had fashioned an Eleggua for me, based on its appearance. Yet now he said that the stone was the one thing that mattered. He reviewed criteria you use to select an appropriate stone. (I had Rosie send me a number of stones she felt spoke to her in hope that one proved the right one.)

The first step is to determine if the stone 'lives.' You first press it to your forehead to feel its energy. The stone should feel cold. Orisha as they are embodied in stones should manifest cool and rational energy. Next you ask a series of questions of Eleggua through manipulating Obi.

1 Is this stone alive?
2 Is this Eleggua?
3 Is this the Eleggua who walks with your client?

All three questions must receive affirmative answers through the oracle.

This reminded me that however hard I try to fit in the Santeria culture/subculture, I'm always going to be something of an outsider. Yes, I know how a stone lives. I appreciate its value as a seemingly eternal fundament, but I cannot exclude the artist's creative expression as being a vital part of the energy to be manifested in any magical object. A typical Santero is going to view that attitude as a type of white guy's decadence.

Maybe I am just walking along forever at a crossroads between one culture and another. Wenger recognized value in this, and she indeed found a lot of respect among the traditional Yoruba for her contributions as both an artist and a priest. In her autobiography she wrote:

Art communicates from the dimensions of archaic depths some items of humankind's sacred mission. It bridges all the chasms that fissure us, of environment, culture, generation, race and class. It communicates beyond all conventions because it testifies to primal veracity and sagacity as a measure from the outward evidence to the essence … There is no reason to be perplexed when an immigrant artist's mind leaves off reminiscing and presents his individual message through the prismal spectre of a totally different religious context.[5]

I don't see my accomplishments as an artist or priest meriting the type of admiration that Wenger's has received. However, even in our pursuit of ancient gods, we can still find recent examples of people who inspire us. And we must continue to build on the shoulders of those who have come before. But I am a bit of an odd man out when it comes to the cultures that have so significantly influenced me, both those of the West and Africa. Going back to this notion of the crossroads, I feel like I'm stuck at their intersections.

Is art less rational and preconceived than ritual?

No. I think that we like to think of art as coming from an irrational sort of subconscious need to express our feelings in concrete forms, but most artists plan and use their training a great deal. Even art that is categorized as expressionistic requires a lot planning, which is objective. I remember a few years back, a friend of mine who is both a hexenwerker and trained artist, once took me to an out of the way museum that housed many of Van Gogh's pen and ink studies. Well every bloody impasto paint stroke had been pre-planned with a clean pen and ink line. A lot of deliberate thought and training went into those paintings that we interpret as being cries from the artist's subconscious. An even more recent abstract expressionist artist uses well established methodologies in how they go about creating their emotive visual effects. As an artist I do many preliminary studies when crafting a print or painting. I even apply a lot of geometry in determining a composition. But I want the final effect to be perceived as direct expression, and intentionally use distressing techniques in order to achieve the appearance of a gritty delineation of form, but I do meditate a lot on my subjects. In ritual work, a lot of the same principles are involved. I practice prayers, study ingredients, etc. In both, the exercise serves as a launching pad to get to a point when I don't have to consciously think about what I am doing. For me that is when something beautiful, magical and irrational emerges. What I've done has a life all of its own. It exists outside me. Maybe I'm briefly in awe or ecstasy when the work is done, and it doesn't necessarily correspond to my preconceived ideas about it. It takes on a life of its own. Hopefully I don't stand back after making a work of art or completing a ritual and think, *Geez, did I screw up.* That does happen. Hopefully what I've accomplished has its own vitality, and it will have something of the desired effect on others and the environment. But I don't have the final say. And maybe the best way I can deal with that is simply by going back to the drawing board. In a sense, if a work of art or ritual is able to have an impact, I'm being very Eleggua. I am acting as a messenger or conduit for something ineffable.

But which Eleggua are specific to the crossroads?

In terms of avatars, there are several. In his book on Eleggua, *Who's Knocking on My Floor: Esu Arts in America*, John Mason cites:

Esu Alikualu (Esu, clearer of death, the concealer) or Esu Alaalu (Esu, owner of concealment); also, Esu Asikaula (Esu, restless person who hits) or Esu Alalu (Esu, splitter of things who hits.) This Esu lives at the crossroads…

Esu Merin Leyii (Esu, he is four). This is the Esu of the four roads that cross; of the four winds; of the open spaces and the four mouths that are talking the four sets of eyes that see: Also Esu Merin-ba-aye, Merin-la-aye (Esu, Four help [or afflict], the world, Four save [or divide] the world). This Esu is owner of roads/fates and his likeness is carved on the divination tray (opon Ifa). From that vantage point he is able to see all that is happening in the world.[6]

Esu Merinlaye is described as the character whose face is depicted on the Babalawo's divining tray. From his position, he can see everything. In spite of his reputation as a seer, many say that he is only worked for evil. The Odu which are marked with termite dust to call

him into being often carry dastardly connotations or indicate breaking moral and sexual taboos: Ofun Meji, Okanran Yeku, Outura Logbe, Irete Logbe, Owonrin Oyeku, Obara Osa, Ogbe Ate, Obara Bogbe, Osa Logbe, and Oshe Irosun. Santeros do not make this Eleggua. His medicine belongs to Ifa. In his Ifa treatise on Eleggua, Anthony Ferreira lists his medicines:

Soil from an Ikun tree
4 types of sand
4 types of water
4 types of Eje (blood)
4 Abere (Spanish Needle, a medicinal herb used throughout the tropics as both an antibiotic and anti-inflammatory, and sometimes specifically as an anti-malaria treatment. Also, *abere* is Cuban slang for needle.)[7]
Kola nut
Iyerosun (termite dust) used to mark the Odus
Eru
4 types of ewe (medicinal leaves)[8]

The number four stands out here. Usually ingredients for an Eleggua fetish number in multiples of 1, 3 and 7. In luckumi, the word for the number four is *erin*, and is usually translated as laughter.

You say Merinlaye is worked for evil. Isn't that ironic for a figure depicted on such a holy instument as a babalawo's diving tray?

Often the stories that have been handed down to us about Eleggua at crossroads show him at his worst. It is not a story about Merinlaye specifically, rather it comes from the Fon and was recorded by the anthropologists Melville J. and Frances S, Herkovits. It's also worth noting that among Santeria practitioners the Elegguas which have evolved from the Fon in Cuba are thought to be extremely mean. This one particularly stood out to me when I was doing research for this piece, in part because I had remembered it incorrectly. That illustrates some of the shortcomings of being too reliant on esoteric knowledge obtained from books rather than direct experience. (There's a photograph in *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought*, which shows costumed dancers depicting a European couple and the man *holds a Bic ballpoint pen in order to write messages to his lover, for writing, rather than dancing, is the mode of communication for the onibobo, the white man.*[9] The implication is that we Europeans have to write everything down, including sacred knowledge. The traditional African internalizes such knowledge through the sinews of his body, how he moves, his physical being.) How I initially remembered this story indicates that even writing it down can limit us when we try to remember, and maybe those who can internalize knowledge through automatic physical responses do a better job of retaining the essence of what needs to be communicated.

The story goes like this. There are these three Elegguas, a sister and two brothers. They're called Minona, Aovi, and Legba. (Aovi is a known avatar of Eleggua in Cuba and Legba is an alternate Fon name for Eleggua and specifically works with Ifa, the cult of the babalawos.) They've each murdered their respective spouses. At the funeral, Legba deceives Fa (Fon for Orunla the force behind the Ifa cult) into giving him payment in the form of some bogus virility medicine intended for the King's son. The three go to the crossroads to split the loot. They divide it into three piles. Well there's one cowry, their currency, left over and

they argue over who gets it. They meet a woman and decide to ask her who should get the extra cowry, and she indicates that in her tribe it should be the eldest, who happened to be the sister. The other two murder her, and then Legba rapes her corpse. This happens two more times when each of the victims designates one of the siblings. Finally Legba brings a carving of a dog to life and they ask the dog. The dog buries the cowry and tells the siblings that anything left over should be given to the ancestors. This satisfies the three. When they return home, Legba and his siblings are brought to trial for the deception with the bogus powder and the three killings. Long and short of it, they all get off through Legba's craftiness and ability to change a carved figure into a living dog. Minona gets dominion over all female affairs, Avoi eternal life among the Gods, and Legba honor, with a position at the front of every household. Henceforth the dastardly events (and there are a few more I left out) enable Legba to be found everywhere, serve as an intermediary to the gods and be necessary to all the work performed by Ifa. (The dog is designated as his special companion.)

Certainly this is not the typical moral denouement one expects, even in an African culture that does not share our preconceived values. The story shows Eleggua to be capable of just about any deceptive and gruesome act. He is one quick thinker and capable of getting away with virtually any violation of taboo.

Now the way I remembered that story from the Fon was that the dog gave him up for killing and copulating with the three dead women and as a sentence he was stuck, never being able to ejaculate. Hence he is often depicted with a penis on his head. He's always ready to go, but he can't really give life through a procreative act. But that punishment is met out to him in a different story. Even though I got this story from a written source, memory plays tricks with us. If we rely too much on written material we can remember it in a highly flawed way when the time comes to act on what we've thought we learned. Perhaps having the backup of having something in writing encourages us too much to think we have something down, because we can eventually refer back to it. That may not work when we really have to put something in practice and don't have an iPhone, laptop or book handy.

One thing that stands out in Crowley's writing on occult practices, and also William Burroughs' writing on how to develop skill as a writer, is the amount of emphasis they both placed on developing good memories through rigorous exercises. It is something that is nurtured in Santeria as well when songs, dance steps and gestures are drilled. The goal is to make recall true and automatic, part of one's being.

The narrative shows that Eleggua is capable of breaking moral boundaries at a crossroads and is in complete control of what happens there. Maybe Legba is a manifestation of Merinlaye or they are one and the same here, but that's a bit beyond my expertise to make an emphatic statement on. Part of the takeaway from this too is that even our darkest secrets and desires can be revealed by an Ifa diviner through his interaction with an Eleggua of the Crossroads since he understands what it is like to be capable of anything. Also, you better take it very seriously if a Babalawo or a Santero tells you that a specific Eleggua is made to work evil, because they can and do.

I think it would be folly for anyone who was not properly initiated to embark on one of the two recipes I gave in this text to make either a generic Eleggua or Eshu Merinlaye. My intention is to provoke creative thought.

If someone uses those recipes for his own creative inspiration or can see in them parallels with his own religious beliefs and culture in a way that enhances his understanding of them, that's great. For instance, if you look at the recipe for Merinlaye, you will see that four abere are used as an ingredient. Abere in this instance is the Luckumi name for Spanish Needle, used worldwide in the preparation of traditional medicines. However, it is also the proper name for a Melanesian she demon who devours her victims in out of the way marshes. Ironically, I did a small painting of her long ago before I ever knew about abere as a medicinal leaf or its use in making that Eleggua who is essential to Ifa divination. Is there a connection there? Is there a connection to crossroads? I believe there may be and it is in the spirit of hopefully inspiring that type of idea making that I'm offering this feeble attempt of mine to understand the relationship between Eleggua and Crossroads.

Rambling. Did you want to make a point or two about a babalawo's divining tray and crossroads?

Yes. Let me set the record straight that I am not a Babalawo. Nor will I try to explain their theology. I view Ifa as a separate religion from Santeria. We share common deities and some aspects of mythology. I am only prepared to discuss this in terms of published works I have read by Babalawos in which I can perceive useful observations that may be applied to the subject.

Awo Fa'Lokun Fatunmbi wrote a book *Awo: Ifa and the Theology of Ifa Divination* in which he set forth a few useful diagrams inspired by the opon Ifa (the Babalawo's diving tray.) They illustrate ways that one can look at a divination space in a variety of four quadrant formulae. I feel that these are useful to both our understanding of any divination space and how to divide a crossroads when performing magical operations there; I will simply list three.

I

North Pole: Our eternal soul which remains with us during successive lifetimes.
South Pole: The Universal Consciousness.
East Point: The physical body.
West Point: The soul as it exists in this lifetime.
Northeast Quadrant: Our conscious mind.

II

North Pole: Containers of Knowledge, Divination corpus.
South Pole: Spiritual forces unique to the earth itself that administer its functions.
East Point: Female (also forces that drive commerce).
West Point: Male (also forces that alter the cultivation of the earth itself).

III

North Pole: Heaven (the force that governs the Universe).
South Pole: Earth (Location, community).
East Point: Ancestors.
West Point: The physical body.
Northeast Quadrant: The gateway between heaven and earth.

Any more thoughts on Eleggua?

Too many. I have heard it from many Santeros time and again that Eleggua represents our own place in the world. Theologically, when you are initiated into the priesthood, one orisha represents your mind and consciousness, a secondary one represents your physical body, and an Eleggua fashioned in a manner that I've discussed represents your feet and how you walk through life. Now Eleggua may also be either the primary or secondary parent, but that is getting a little beyond the scope of what I wish to discuss. Eleggua is the orisha most commonly given to people in various initiations in Santeria, and the one we most often talk to and consult on all levels. Numerous times in writing this piece I've gone over to my own Elegguas to ask advice on what I'm writing using an oracle of four pieces of coconut. Elegguas are typically very small physically when compared to the more grandiose presentations of other orisha we receive. Of course Eleggua is often described as a child or being small.

One story identifies why Eleggua is so profoundly important and esteemed in Santeria.

Once God Almighty herself fell ill and lingered near oblivion. All of the orisha, expressive and articulate forces tried to affect cures through prayer, magic, herbal preparations, etc. but none could. The end seemed near, but finally Eleggua who was the smallest, and an itinerant mischief-maker among the orisha, stepped forward and placed a balm on God's lips and God came back to life. From that day forward Eleggua was to be first in everything much to the dismay of the other orisha, and Eleggua alone would be in charge of God's messages…

This story illustrates why Eleggua is always the first to be fed at all Santeria rituals. Also most practitioners take it to heart to illustrate how even the tiniest most seemingly insignificant among us can redeem the world. Santeria practitioners as a rule come from the lower socio-economic class. Many have faced social scorn, have criminal records, are not formally educated, live in poverty and typically are not well regarded by the greater society. For a figure such as Eleggua to be so revered and important is very inspiring. The smallest can count enormously.

This reminds me of the first time I met someone who was uniquely identified as a child of Eleggua. I was working as a journalist on a piece on Santeria and was doing interviews with members of a New York based house. These are my recollections from a piece published years ago in Shaman's Drum.

I chat with Gary, who is a wiry son of Eleggua – the opener of all paths and possibilities and the consummate trickster. Gary's Puerto Rican punk street-toughness contrasts his child-like optimism of finding an egalitarian society. (It befits a child of Eleggua to embody such diverse polarities.) In a conversation that has rambled between us since late that afternoon he explains why he came to this Santeria house:

It's a very fair, kind religion. It doesn't discriminate against anybody, he says. *In Catholicism I would have been questioned for hanging out with certain kinds of people for the color of their skin. All that racism, I've dealt with it from different angles… I've always been the type of person who's wanted to have a lot of different types of people around him. I have friends who are women, friends who are gay, friends who are black, and friends who are white. My circle of friends is very vast. In other religions, in other circles, I feel like there's a lot of judgment for that. Here people are allowed to be themselves and that's the kindness of this house.*

This is the statement he wants to make for the article I'm writing. His quote won't make it into the final piece. I did not see him again for a few years until I was initiated as a Santeria priest. When I did, I failed to recognize him, even though he had made a friendly and vivid impression on me .

When next I meet him during a séance that took place just before the formalities of my initiation began three years later he is tiny and emaciated, covered with Kaposi's sarcoma lesions. His fine short hair seems to be thinning as he speaks. *Hi, I'm Gary*, he smiles broadly and shoots out his hand. He is the last person I will shake hands with for a year. He points out to me how unusually tiny the beads are that Baba used to make his collares (Santeria beaded necklaces representing the different orisha). *That's because I'm tiny like a firecracker.*

Gary spends a lot of time hanging out with us over the next week. He asks me how long I've been infected with HIV. I tell him, *I was diagnosed eight years ago, and have probably been infected for at least ten or fifteen years.*

I just found out a few months ago, he says. *You should have seen me before. I was a real tough, good looking, muscular guy. I was a martial arts master… You know it gives me a lot of hope to see someone like you who's lived with it for so long.* I do not have the heart to tell him that he's probably been infected for at least as long as I have.

The next day he comes to tell me that's he's told his whole family about me, and hearing that I'm doing so well makes them feel a lot better. He wants me to come have dinner with him and his aunt the next time I'm in town. Before I go back home he reiterates how much hope I have given him. He gives me a Krishna necklace he wears all the time. *I didn't have time to buy you a gift for your big day, but I want you to know this necklace really means a lot to me…* He extends his hand to me, and I nearly take his, but stop short. We laugh. We've repeated this action many times over the past two days, and I keep repeating that an Iyawo, a newly crowned priest, cannot shake hands. *Nearly gotcha that time,* he winks.

We touch shoulders when we finally say goodbye outside as we finish packing the car for my long journey back home. We hug. He's so ravaged, it feels as though his bones could poke through his clothes.

A month later, I visit Baba. It is two days after Gary's funeral. Of Gary, Baba says: *Very recently I divined that Gary would be healed if he made santo. And he agreed to make santo, and I was going to do this without charging him because it was going to save his life. Later on he came to me and decided he wasn't going to make santo because a relative had prayed to Jesus and told him Jesus had healed him. And he wanted to give Jesus a chance. He died this week. So I would like to learn something from that. I failed to impress upon him how important it was to do santo. Or maybe I should learn that maybe Jesus did heal him, and by Jesus' intercession he went to a nice place. I'm confused. I don't know. I would like to meditate on that. It's too recent for me to make a judgment. I do have a feeling of having failed to impress upon him how strongly I believe that if he had made santo he would be with us today.*

I unearthed the transcripts of my first interviews with Baba and members of the ilé three years ago. I discovered that Gary was the same Gary I interviewed in the garden … There is a saying, *Eshu gives an order tomorrow, so that it can be heard yesterday*. Now I know what that means. I wear Gary's necklace as a reminder. Three years ago, I was afflicted, and Gary ostensibly wasn't.[10]

It's nearly fifteen years later and I still have Gary's necklace. In the years that have followed, I have experienced probably an equal number of incidents characterized by betrayal, scamming, jealousy and mean-spiritedness as I have those that indicate loyalty,

compassion, bravery and spiritual understanding from fellow Santeria practitioners. To describe these incidents that have inspired those perceptions on my part would just add more stories to the mix here and probably not advance a reader's understanding significantly. As much as Santeria has provided a moral framework and source of both creative and spiritual inspiration for me, it continues to put me in highly equivocal situations. The way to go from here is not necessarily clear. However, looking over my experiences in total often the answers seem to have presented themselves years earlier and should have been self-evident. Don't ask a question once, and don't ask it twice, especially when you already know the answer.

But I still think of Gary and his ephemeral presence at two important psychological crossroads in my life, and he is very much Eleggua. We perceive orisha through fellow human beings. When we see an orisha possess someone it is a flesh blood human being with whom we interact. Orisha have had real lives, full of desires, mistakes, and triumphs. Wenger pointed out that Yoruba culture reflects a tragic imagination. That reverberates with Europeans. To me it is a large part of the reason Santeria's essence has been able to endure the trauma of slavery and disenfranchisement when other African and ancient cultures have not. Its sensibility has found a resonance with Hispanics and groups whose cultural education and prejudices are of European origin. Most of the lives ascribed to orisha end tragically. Yet it is through the mechanism of tragedy that they are apotheosized and once again become orisha. Their dramas and comedies are recognizable and poignant to us. They are divine and we too aspire to their potential within ourselves. We exist as their agents, and Eleggua is the primary messenger who points to transcendence as being a real possibility as we navigate life's metaphoric crossroads over which he has mastery. Gary's simple kindness, humor and ultimate optimism in the face of his imminent demise are constant reminders to me to expect something better from myself along the way.

Inevitably there seem 101 more things I could say about Eleggua and crossroads. One of the refrains from Eleggua's most popular song can be translated: *Talk a long time, talk little, Eleggua talks little; Talk a long time, talk little.*

I hope I said enough.

ENDNOTES

1 This group is usually termed Yoruba, a term necessity dictates I use, but the term *Yoruba* itself is problematic. It did not exist prior to the 19th century. The British used it to describe several tribes, including the Nago, Egbado, Ijesa, Oyo, and Ijebu. They shared similar languages, many but not all deities in common, and a belief that Ile Ife was the birthplace of humanity and their place of origin. The British decided to create a written version of the language spoken in Oyo, the predominant political power in the region, so that they could indoctrinate these tribes with the Christian Bible. The tribes spoke similar but distinct tonal languages. West African languages do not follow our familiar English model in which a change in accent in how a word is pronounced does not alter its signification. A change in a vowel pitch or emphasis transforms the meaning of any given word. Hence the name of the deity Ogun can be translated as medicine, magic, war, inheritance, etc. These tribes also incorporated beliefs from neighboring tribes in Africa, including the Dahomean, Ijo, Togo, among others. When they arrived in Cuba they were able to recognize one another based on shared beliefs and similar languages and employed the term *Oluckumi*, shortened to Luckumi, meaning *friend* by which to recognize each other. They also incorporated beliefs and practices from other African tribes present in Cuba with whom they intermarried, most notably the Bakongo and Arara. The Luckumi in Cuba adopted one another's deities as a practical means to ensure their worship would survive. This makes spelling Luckumi words and prayers and translating them a very problematic affair. The language has yet to be standardized and there are significant differences in how ritual language is pronounced based on regional and lineage orientation.

2 Perez, Celio (Oba Ecun) *Oricha: Methodology of the Yoruba Religion*, Miami, FL: OBAECUN Books, 1990, p.7.

3 Lele, Ocha'ni, *The Diloggun: The Orisha, Proverbs, Sacrifices and Prohibitions of Cuban Santeria*, Rochester, VT, Destiny Books, 2003, p. 423.

4 Beier, Ulli, *The Return of the Gods: The Sacred Art of Susanne Wenger*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1975, p.91.

5 Wenger, Susanne and Gert Chesi: *A Life with the Gods in their Yoruba Homeland*, Austria: Perlinger Verlag Ges, 1985, p.209.

6 Mason, John, *Who's Knocking on My Floor?: Esu Arts in the Americas*, Brooklyn, NY: Yoruba Theological Archministry, 2003, p. 16.

7 It is my opinion that either ingredient is appropriate. The artisan/magus creating this Eleggua needs to consider the following in making his/her decision which to employ. The herb confers healing and protective properties to the toxic character of this Eleggua. Needles are common ingredients in Elegguas. Usually they number either three or nine. Three is among Eleggua's emblems. Nine may be a reference to his mythic birth from the orisha Oya, who is associated with the number nine and who abandoned her child Eleggua on a trash heap, or to the volatile divination verse Osa revealed by nine open cowry shell mouths. Using four suggests a Santeria custom of fortifying one's residence by placing four railroad spikes at cardinal points on the property. The spikes are marked with either geomantic glyphs for the four senior divination verses or names or sigils for four primordial orisha.

8 Ferreira, Anthony, *Esu Osanyin*, Brooklyn, NY: Athelia Henrietta Press, 2000, p. 22-C.

9 Drewal, Henry John and John Pemberton III with Rowland Ablodun, *Yoruba, Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought,* New York, NY: Center for African Art, 1989, p180.

10 Lerner, Eric K. "*The Healing Path of Santeria*," Shaman's Drum: A Journal of Experiential Shamanism and Spiritual Healing, Ashland, OR: The Cross-Cultural Shamanism Network, No. 51, Spring 1999, p.59–60, p.67.

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ART

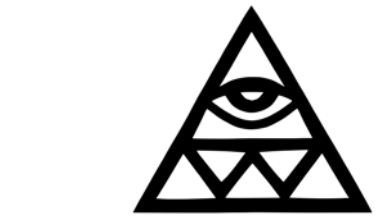
Eleggua's Worlds
Intaglio monoprint variants by Eric K. Lerner

THE WORLD

SOUL DREAM

PAGES OF AN UNEARTHED MEONIC GRIMOIRE · HAGEN VON TULIEN

Being certain movements between the surface of consciousness and the very deep fundamental regions of the unconscious mind. During special states of gnostic attunement archaic images rise up from the unconscious world of the spirits to the surface of the ego. Initiatic experiences and visions, coming from the most primordial and instinctual energies hidden in the chthonic deep of Earth and the infinite cosmic spaces beyond Saturn, uniting the sorcerer with divine creativity.



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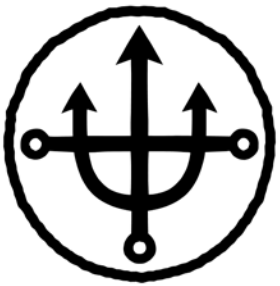

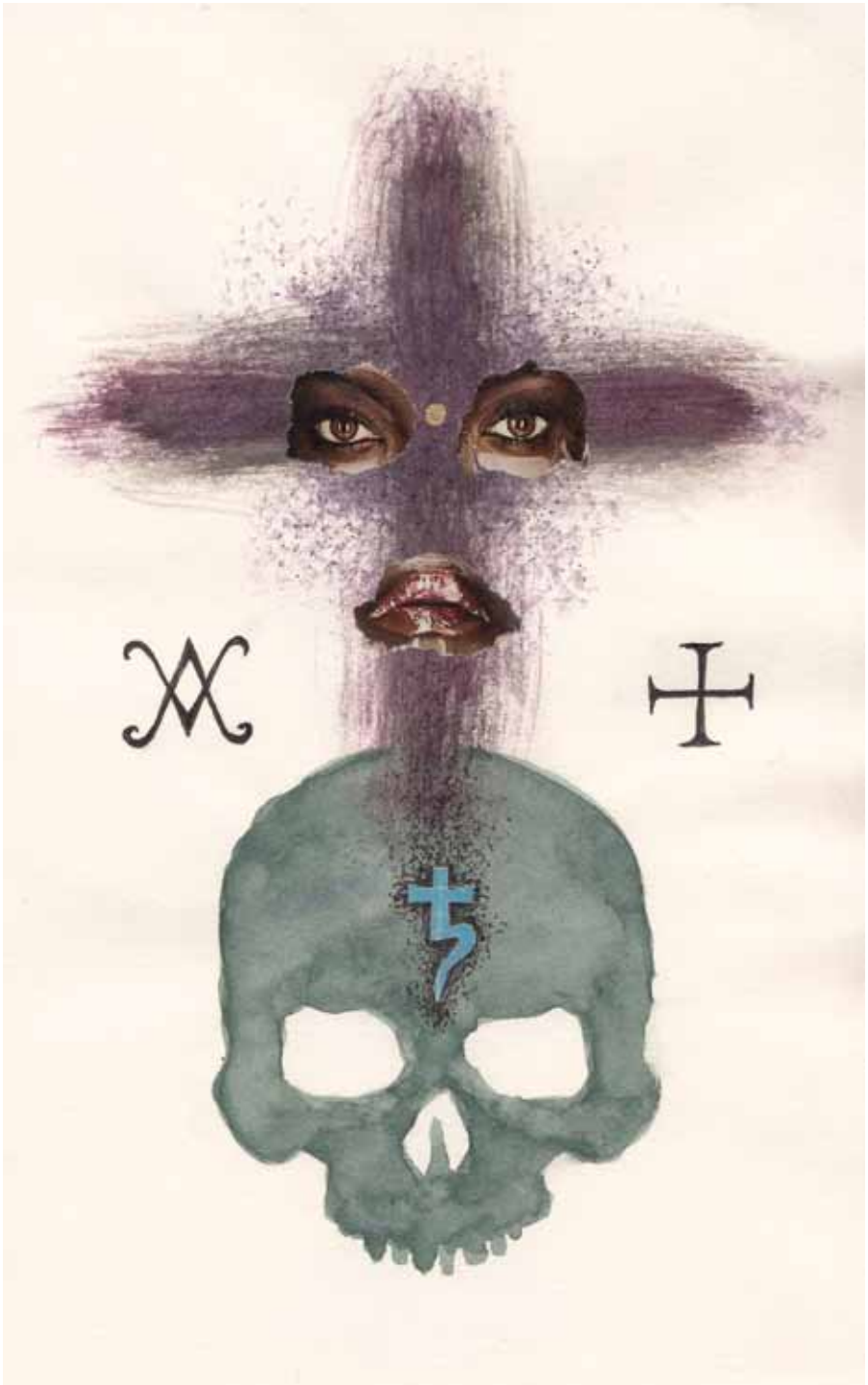

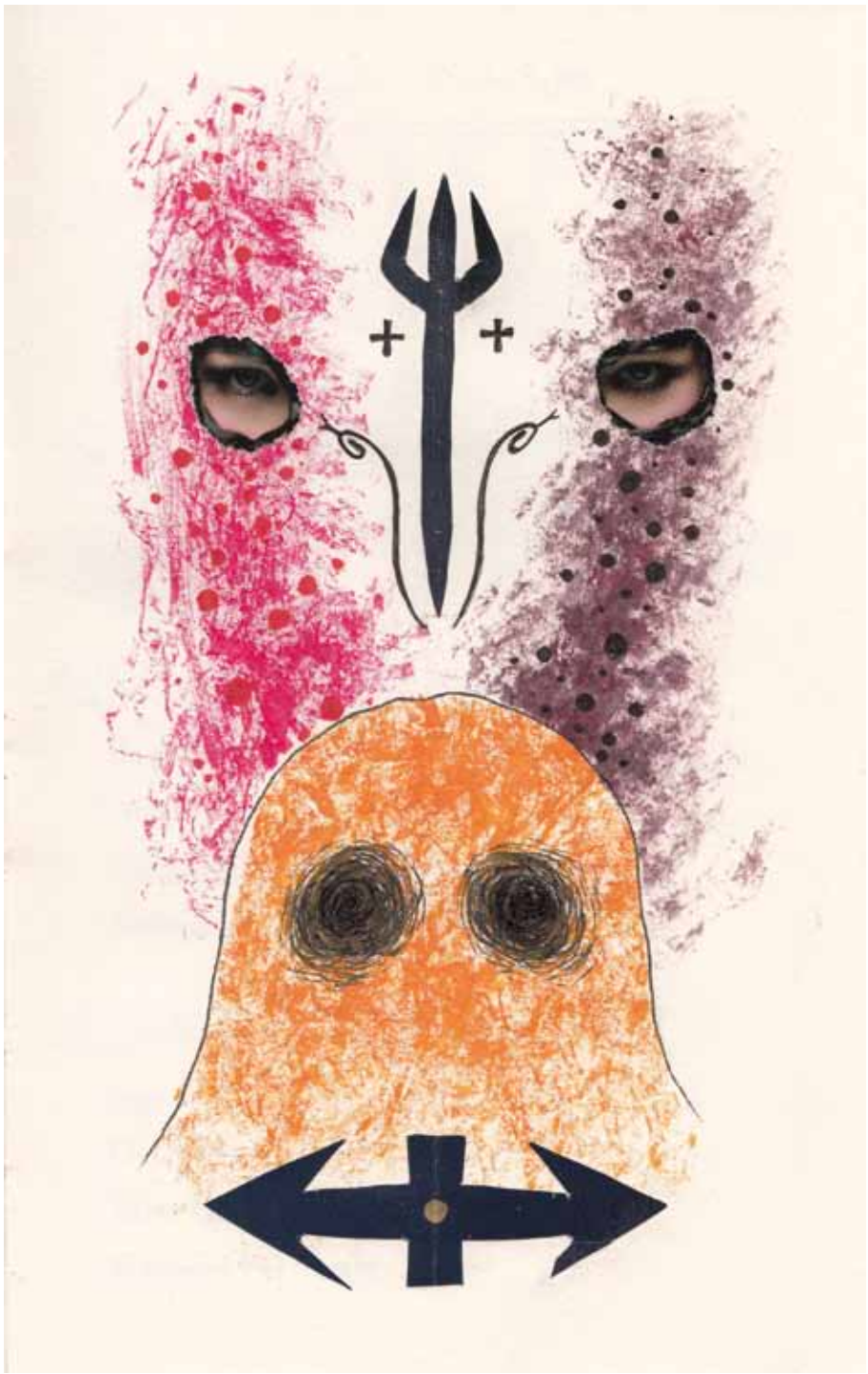

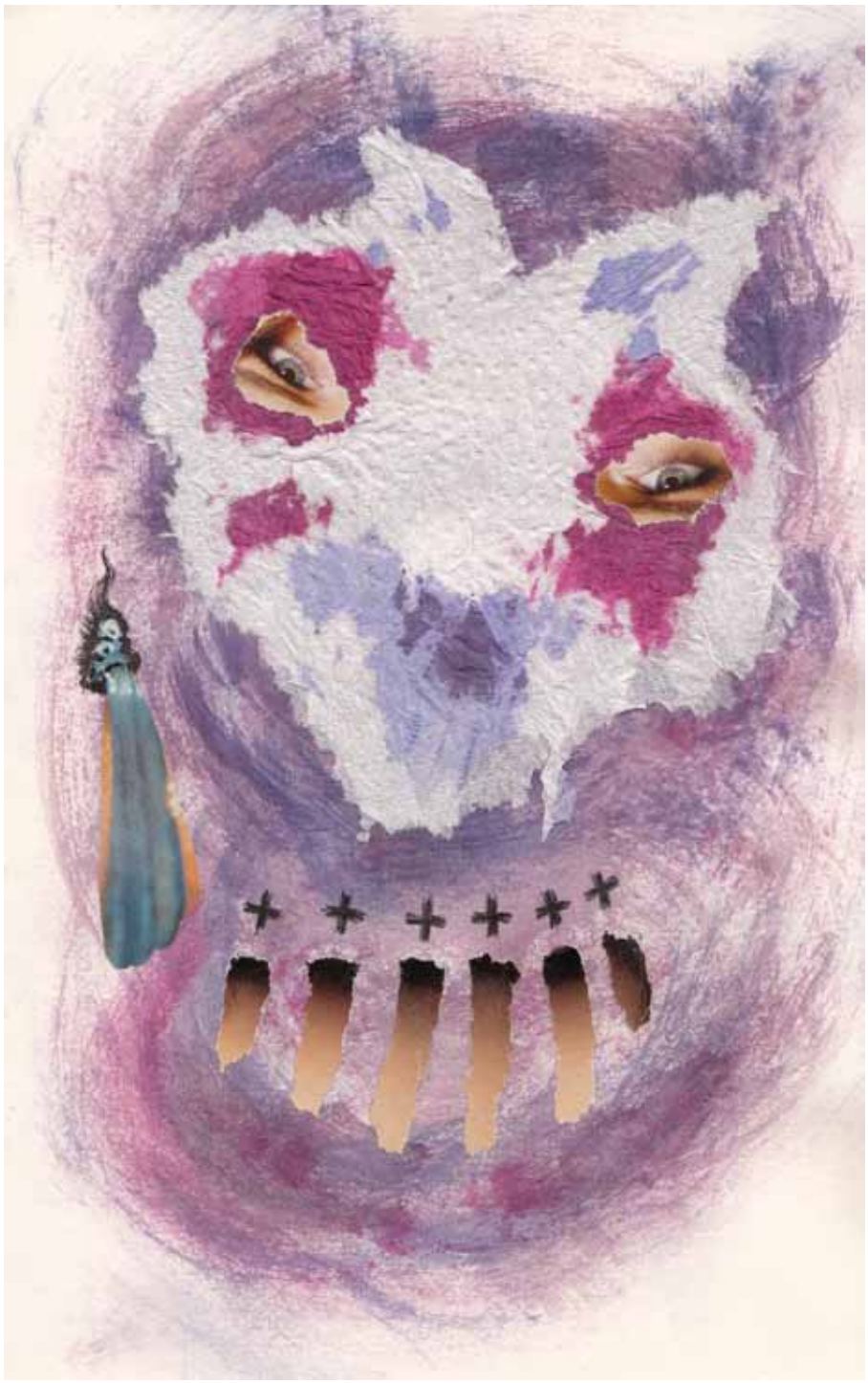

NIGROMANTIC PUTREFACTION

OF WESTERN ALCHEMY AND PALO MAYOMBE

Repeatedly in alchemical literature we find reference to the Putrefaction of the Prima Materia; a stage represented by death's heads, by ravens sitting astride grinning skulls, even by full skeletons in their graves, again mounted by crows and ravens. The alchemical tradition is notoriously multi-layered; so much so that initiation has been the only way to make practical sense of it, defining a path leading through the labyrinth of alchemical understandings.

Putrefaction has been interpreted as a dark period in one's life, as a confrontation of death and loss, as a particular chemical process (when considering alchemy as an external process with an analogical prima materia) and as a destruction of the mind during meditative process. None of these things are untrue, but they are a labyrinth of understanding in themselves. The true secret of Putrefaction lies in the arts of Nigromancy. Putrefaction is an engagement with Death, a communion with it. Currently in Western alchemy this step is approached indirectly. Often putrefaction is experienced without the understanding of ancestry and the nature of the dead that lives on in the African diaspora religions, in particular Palo Mayombe.

In order to understand why Putrefaction is in fact and practice related to the Nigromantic arts, we have to understand the role the dead play in the evolution of the person. In Alchemy a specific goal is sought – we work to create a golden and god-like nature, so that we are free of simple death and enabled to travel on the subtle planes without requiring rebirth. There is no valid alchemical process that doesn't include the Putrefaction, as Death must first be broached before renewed life can be claimed by the alchemist. The Pact with the Dead is at the center of this process. In places where ancestral worship is actively practiced, this putrefaction is a natural part of a person's spiritual life; in the West, with the sequestering of the dead into graveyards at the demand of the Church, this putrefaction became something available primarily to clergy and nigromancers. Unfortunately, in the modern Western Mystery Tradition nigromancy has been separated from alchemy in practice and understanding.

That is not the case in the central-African rooted tradition of Palo Mayombe. By understanding generally the Putrefaction process of Palo and how the Mayembero works with the Dead, we might gain some understanding about how to re-integrate the nigromantic Putrefaction into Western alchemy with full awareness. There will be no syncretism here, only co-exploration. There is no need to appropriate from this living tradition – instead we light our own flame from its candle, using its light to illuminate the wisdom of our past. We must understand that wisdom is wisdom, and by exploring the approach to Putrefaction in the African diaspora traditions alive in the Americas, the Western Alchemist may learn to approach the Dead and the stage of putrefaction with greater understanding and efficacy, using the tools available within his own Tradition.

Christopher D. Bradford

PALO MAYOMBE AND WESTERN ALCHEMY

The Nganga, the Alchemical Vessel, the Prima Materia

At the center of Palo Mayombe is the Nganga, an iron or terracotta vessel in which a Spirit is given life. It's important to understand that this isn't the same as the Spirit-pot used in Western and Middle Eastern practices. The Nganga is not simply a house for the spirit, nor simply a focal-point; it is the *Body* of the spirit. This is important to understand for the alchemist when approaching Palo Mayombe; in Alchemy the external materia includes the alchemical Sulfur, Salt, and Mercury, which are physical substances that serve as reference to the subtle forces that our cosmos is fundamentally composed of. If we consider the Dry Way of Antimony as given by Fulcanelli, we see that the materia is a mercuric sulfide. A material that contains mercury and salt fused together, a perfect analogy. The Prima Materia is a body as well in all alchemies, be they internal or external. The Nganga is not simply an anchor for spirit, but the raising of a new Life through the agency of Death and Spirit. On our physical world the death of any one thing results in teeming life, and in the Nganga this life-giving power of death is put to direct and creative use.

Different rama (Palo lineages) have different methods for creating the body of the Nganga, but one thing that is consistent for all of the Nganga is the careful inclusion of substances necessary to stir new life, to alchemically create new life from 'dead' substance. The entity that is the nganga is very much an amalgam of different spiritual potencies, brought together into a new life. The Palero sees within everything the subtle virtue, the light of Nzambi – nothing is truly inanimate, all things possess their Spirit. This is how the experienced alchemist sees the world as well, if he hasn't been infected by the scourge of materialist thought. The Palero is a child of Nzambi, the creative power that permeates existence. Man is made most of all things in the image of a Creator, and so learns to wield the forces of spirit in order to create new life. So it is with the alchemist in his work. The Nganga is quickened through the agency of Spirit, the same as the Western Philosopher's Stone. The Nganga is interesting as an alchemical vessel from a Western perspective because it represents a complete alchemy; it intentionally uses vegetable, mineral, animal, and human elements to create a world of life, a new microcosm of the macrocosmic world. It is the Philosopher's Stone as birthed in Africa and the Americas. Within the Nganga you will always find materia that represent each of these worlds of life. Palo Mayombe is especially sensitive to the powers of life within materia. Herbs have their own inherent spiritual virtue, as do minerals. The bones and the flesh of animals and men also speak, and these too are included in the Nganga. With the animating power of a Mpungo (a great ancestral spirit that expresses an aspect of Nzambi, which is similar to the understanding of Sulfur in western Alchemy, as it is expressed in natural forces) and secret process given only to initiates of our cult, the Nganga is brought to life. As a bridge between the world of life and death, it is unparalleled.

In the Western tradition our alchemical works are often separated in practice – you have the vegetable work of Spagery, the Mineral work of external Alchemy, the animal work (which is mostly creation of particular Salts for use in external alchemy), and the Human work of direct internal Alchemy. Now, any initiated alchemist will tell you that Alchemy is Alchemy, and that once the First Matter is grasped, these distinctions be-

come somewhat immaterial. In practice, because of the scarcity of deep understanding in the West of alchemy these operations are rarely brought together, except in the cases of certain operative alchemical Orders and well-read and researched individuals. In the Orders the external and internal works are done simultaneously and in co-operation. There is a careful nurturing of the spiritual power in Western Alchemy, turning 'dead' matter into 'philosophical' matter, which is what Palo Mayombe does as well. In the West the Prima Materia is, of course, the alchemist himself, with the analogical exterior matters used to work upon that self. It is the same for Palo Mayombe; there is no separation between the Nganga and the Ngangalero. Once the Nganga is quickened and the pact with it made, the Nganga and the Ngangalero are one and the same. This is true for the relationship between the alchemist and the Philosopher's Stone. The alchemist, when he has completed the Great Work, is the Philosopher's Stone. The body created simultaneously with his success is a part of him and an expression of his own virtue, fully integrated with his Soul.

This is important to note from the perspective of the Western putrefaction. When this occurs to the external substance – if the process is approached correctly, and spiritual link is made between the alchemist and the materia – it occurs within the alchemist at the same time. Within the Palo Mayombe tradition, the Nganga is not brought to life until after its own putrefaction. Only then can a powerful link between life and death, the living and the dead, be made.

When the nganga is quickened and the pact made, there is an ouroboros of virtue and understanding between the un-manifest and the manifest worlds; the Ngangalero becomes a whole being, with access to the wisdom of ancestors and the dead of his Rama. This is another way to perceive the image of the snake eating its own tail, eating itself. By internalizing and communing with the Dead, the Dead become alive within the World and the Ngangalero. When this occurs, the Ngangalero also becomes alive in the world of the Dead. The Head eats the Tail, the living eat the dead, who become alive within them. From here great spiritual progress can be made, and special wisdom and understanding can be gained from the living connection to the hidden world. The Ngangalero joins the spiritual line of his Rama, and through this link has his own immortality.

THE GRIMOIRE AND CEREMONIAL TRADITIONS

In the Western grimoire tradition, we have lists of powerful Spirits, who rule different areas of the earth that may be communed with. The pacts and sacrifices that are involved within this work create an ouroboros for the Western alchemist that is similar to that which the Ngangalero experiences. The Ngangalero, through union with the blessed Dead, becomes one with a line of priests in his Rama, and remains one with that line after death. He continues to commune with the living world through his 'ancestral' descendants in his Rama. This is an immortality, and one we are not unfamiliar with if we approach the tradition of the Holy Daemon (or Holy Guardian Angel) and the effects of spiritual initiation.

In the Western tradition entities such as the *Grimorum Verum*'s Scirilin and the Holy Guardian Angel serve as intermediaries between the world of the dead and the living. This is a role similar to that which the spirit of the Nganga works, creating a living connection with spirit.

The Holy Guardian Angel is an entity we come into full Union with, and through that Union we find our way into the realm of Spirit is opened. We find that our nature is changed, and that through this relationship we attain wisdom not available to the common man.

It is said in alchemy that the Prima Materia reveals its secret fire through destruction and trial; Fulcanelli gives as an example the beating of iron, which results in sparks. An alchemist named Emmanuel LeBouter, in an excellent paper *The Two Marriages in Alchemy* written for the Rose Croix journal, says a similar thing of sugar which gives off light when broken in a dark room. Initiation can be the breaking of the alchemist, revealing his own measure of the Inner Fire to him, and stoking it through connection with those who have come before. Like the maceration of plant matters in Spagery, this is a necessary destruction, a preparation of spirit and body for the rebirth. It is purification and calcination. The putrefaction which occurs after the initiation prepares the matter for rebirth – regardless of whether that initiation is into a nigromantic religion like Palo Mayombe, or one resulting from solitary communion and relationship working with the rites of the Western grimoires. In fact, no rebirth can occur without there first being putrefaction.

I contend that many of the Alchemists of old were also nigromancers; look no further than John Dee, who is well known as an alchemist but known especially for his nigromantic skills. I suspect much of the Wisdom gained by alchemists about what substance to use best for external process was gleaned through invocation and communion with the world of the Dead. As materialism crept its way into common thought, and then into alchemical practice, the work of alchemy and that of the nigromancer became separated. This is a shame, as in my opinion a complete practice within the Western tradition is informed by both lines of work. Through alchemy the nigromancer learns to practically wield the forces of life, to create as he has been created. He learns to refine himself by working with the secret fires, which are not directly approached in nigromantic work. Through nigromancy, the alchemist learns to commune with the dead and enter into Wisdom and a co-operative existence that makes of him a priest of the hidden. He is given a Voice and connection, and access to wisdom. It's easy to forget that the Adepti referred to in magical circles who've accomplished the Great Work are Dead, and that through initiation and alchemical practice we aim to join them in their glorified state. They are both Living and Dead, immortal because of initiation, Union, and the alchemical work.

THE BONES OF THE DEAD

We need look no further than Edward Kelley, *that famous English Alchymyst* as he's referred to by Meric Causabon, for evidence of nigromantic practice by alchemists. The mysteries of Spirit are a whole thing, and the alchemist of old was no stranger to dealing with the dead. We look at the Palero and his work with the nfumbe, which are the bones of the dead. The bones carry a virtue just like herbs and minerals, a spiritual virtue. This virtue is that of Death, a direct connection to the denizens of the spiritual world. The nfumbe are present in the Nganga, and it is through them that the virtue of the dead is connected with by the Palero. The Western alchemist is traditionally no stranger to the graveyard either, and this wisdom of approaching the world of Spirit through the dead is part and parcel to the nigromancer's practice.

Taking a look at the good Mr. Kelley again, Causabon in *A True and Faithful Relation* says:

... (Kelley) intreated this foresaid servant to go to the grave of this man so recently interred, which he did; and withal, did help them to dig up the Carcase of the poor Catiff, whom by their Incantations, they made him (or rather some evil Spirit through his Organs) to speak, who delivered strange predictions concerning the said Gentleman.

It isn't just Paleros who haunt the graveyards! It's also important to note that any spirit could speak through the bones of the dead; it wasn't a raising of a particular individual so much as an opening of the lines of communication between the living and the dead.

Kelley was famous for his claims to have discovered the Stone, and of course for his profound knowledge of nigromancy. I have come to understand that these two understandings go hand in hand.

Another well-known Alchemist who was also a nigromancer is the legendary Dr. Johann Georg Faust, whose life was the seed from which the tale of Doctor Faust was told. Dr. Faust was a true practitioner of the Hermetic Triumvirate, being known for his skill with Astrology, Alchemy, and Nigromancy.

There is also the good Count Cagliostro, arguably the most famous and influential of alchemists. He also was well known for his skill in nigromancy. Trithemius, John Dee, and Agrippa were alchemists and nigromancers all. The wisdom of the dead has informed alchemical practice for our forebears, and will do so for us as well if we work to understand it and incorporate it into practice.

INTEGRATING UNDERSTANDING

Approaching the Western work with sight made deeper by comprehension of the mysteries and the technology of Palo Mayombe makes one thing evident; the revitalization of Western nigromantic practice is extremely important. If we are to approach the Great Work from the perspective of the Hermetic Triumvirate of Alchemy, Magic and Astrology, the living wisdom of the classical tradition is as deep as that of the African traditions. It doesn't need to take directly from the cultural practices of the Diaspora traditions – although it must be noted that the Americas are a part of the West, and as such traditions like Hoodoo, Quimbanda, Santeria and Palo Mayombe are part of the broader Western esoteric culture. They are siblings and not strangers, and Europe and Africa have been sharing wisdom since time immemorial. The sharing of wisdom that happened in ancient Alexandria is playing out again in the Americas. We are blessed in the West to have roots both in Europe and Africa, a co-evolution of magical tradition that lifts us all. Unfortunately the cultural approach to the dead in modern secular Western society has to an extent crippled our understanding of the role the dead play in spiritual evolution. The Greek approach to the heroic dead, including their funerary and initiatory practices, stand as the Western model for a living nigromantic practice. Barring a rebirth of those traditions, the grimoire tradition and to an extant esoteric Christianity – with its veneration of the Saints, who are plainly the blessed Dead – are the best approaches for the modern alchemist who wishes to gain initiation into gnosis of the world of the Dead.

A COMPLETE WESTERN ALCHEMICAL PRACTICE

What does this look like? In my opinion, a complete alchemical practice includes internal alchemy working directly on the Prima Materia, paired with the simple alchemy of Food and Water, active nigromantic practice and a devotional practice. What this does is change the substance of the Prima Materia, doing so from the inside-out with the regular Internal Alchemy, and from the outside-in with the alchemy of food and water. This refines the substance of the the alchemist's spiritual and physical body, making the indwelling of the Soul in its fullness possible. Nigromancy establishes the pact with the Dead, creating an ouroboros of being that informs the alchemist's practice with a living connection to Spirit. This is important, because without the Spirit we are simply play-acting. With this done, he becomes part of a heavenly body, similar to the Christian concept of the Body of Christ. A pact with the Dead and full communion makes the alchemist one of the Living Dead, and this is a wondrous thing, for the Dead serve as a bridge for Spirit. We can look to the Yowa for a deeper understanding of this.

If we look to the Yowa, the Palo Mayombe cosmogram – which has its equivalent in the West as the Solar cross visually, if not in wisdom – we see that at the height of the circle, on the Mountain of Life, are the living and manifest. At the base of the circle, in the Waters of Death, we find the un-living and un-mani-

fest. At the Center we have Nzambi, which permeates all. In order for the Living to move toward the essence of Nzambi, they must move toward the Waters, move toward death. In order for the Dead to move toward Nzambi, they must move toward the Mountain, and toward life. It is through communion and relationship between the Dead and the Living that beings can approach the essence of Nzambi, and stand on its point of the cosmogram as a creative and immortal power.

When the putrefaction is accomplished, and the dead live within the Alchemist as he lives within them, the alchemist stands at the center of the Cross and can receive the fullness of Nzambi's creative power. This is akin to the Incineration and Multiplication, and is centered on devotional and meditative work, contemplation of Nzambi in all of its fullness. Being filled with the creative powers of the source of existence, and standing as a creator himself, the alchemist accomplishes the Great Work and becomes whole. This simply cannot be accomplished without the putrefaction. Modern alchemists do experience the putrefaction, of course, but it is often impersonal, experienced as death or loss visiting the life intensely. This is rooted in the loss of Western ancestor cults. This is a great difficulty, because the alchemist experiences the worst drawbacks of the putrefaction without receiving the fullness of its benefits. The bridge between the dead and the living must be a full and powerful thing before the Incineration and Multiplication can take place. We see in modern Western practice the great trials that occur before connection with the Holy Dead is had in its fullness, referred to as the Dark Night of the Soul. These trials are not entirely necessary; we swim in the waters of Death without a guide, and then find it manifesting in unpleasant ways in our lives. The forces of death, finding themselves without a Head to speak through, come out in whatever means is easiest for their manifestation in the alchemist's life. Often times this takes the alchemist to the very brink of death and sorrow himself. Without union with the blessed Dead to serve as a point of contact, we can drown.

This is where the chthonic spirits come in handy, especially where we lack an ancestral cult. Coming into communion with an entity such as Scirlin who guides, or the Nganga and ancestral line of a Rama, allows for a meeting of life and death within ourselves, so that both forces are in balance and we stand at the point of creation. Alchemists lucky to be members of operative alchemical orders, such as the Rosea Rubea et Aurea Crucis, or my own Ordo Octopi Pulveri Nigri, have processes in place for connecting with the blessed dead with operations aimed at addressing the Cthonic (such as the Adeptus Major work of the RR et AC) and connecting with the Holy Guardian Angel/Holy Dæmon. These tools are available to grimoire alchemists as well, of course, if they take part in the greater grimoire community and are aware. Grimoire magicians who spend all of their time looking for treasure or some other foolishness are puffers in the same way as alchemists who pine for physical gold. Spiritual work rarely results directly in massive physical wealth; instead it provides wisdom which can spur our work in the World. It provides opportunity. Certainly powerful spirits can greatly aid our pursuit of wealth, just as deep understanding of metallurgy can result in some useful transformations, but at the end of the day we have to work for our bread. The grimoire wisdom can be a great tool for personal evolution and understanding, and with examples like Jake Stratton-Kent's works, or Michael Cecchetelli's, we are seeing gold reaped

again from that long misunderstood tradition.

The importance of the dead in alchemical practice cannot be understated, as they provide and enable deep connection to Spirit. Without that connection, our alchemical works are lifeless. In many ways our death-phobic broader culture limits expression and understanding of death, and that tends to trickle in to our views of alchemical and magical work. Work with the dead has become construed as something dark or evil and other theurgic works seen as light and beautiful. This perspective is amazingly stupid; the entire realm of Spirit is the realm of the Dead. This must be understood and internalized. The world of the unmanifest is the world of the dead. There is no such thing as a proper sorcerer or alchemist who is not a Nigromancer. If you aren't working with the Dead, you're missing a major key in your theurgic practice.

If we look at the initiation rites of the RR et AC we see the blessed dead play an intricate role, and without the encounter one cannot be said to have entered fully into that brotherhood. I am speaking, of course, of Christian Rosenkreutz, who serves as symbol for the spiritual body of the entire brotherhood. He is the corpus of the Rosicrucian adepts, the Head through which those blessed dead speak. We can learn from public documents that during the initiation ritual and within the Vault it takes place in, the candidate comes upon a sarcophagus. At the height of this ritual of induction into the Rosicrucian brotherhood, the candidate opens the sarcophagus and sees Christian Rosenkreutz. His appearance is a personal matter for each Adept, and there is a mystery there as well. This contemplation is the true initiation, aligning the Rosicrucian adept with the body of Adepti that have gone before, joining him to the lineage of Rosicrucian adepts who are both dead and ever-living. Failure to properly understand death obscures this truth even from many of those within that particular Tradition.

Communion with the dead to enable personal evolution is deeply entrenched in our spiritual traditions, whether we recognize it or not. There simply is no alchemical progress made where putrefaction hasn't taken place.

This putrefaction is truly only the beginning of the work for the adept, be he an Alchemist or an Ngangalero. It is the Incineration that both are concerned with, the fiery path of personal evolution that is both a blessing and a curse. Devotional work is the key to it all; love of Spirit and deep communion with Nzambi as it is expressed in nature allow the adept an ever deeper connection, and a more solid foundation at the center of the Cross.

It is also worth noting the exquisite balance found when standing at the center. The four winds and humors are balanced perfectly, and the spiritual with the physical. This is the golden goal at the heart of the living spiritual tradition, a great gift from the dead.

CROSSING WORLDS

I HAVE BEEN LIVING IN EXILE for eleven years. I left my country in October 1999, to work in an industrial diamond mine in Africa. It is a dream job for me, giving me exactly what I asked for then: the time and the means to study and practice magick, and to travel the globe. I have explored the deserts of Namibia, known a German town built on the Skeleton Coast, been to Macchu Picchu and crossed Europe a couple of times. And I have bought books, lots of books. Books about magick and related disciplines, like Physics and Neuroscience.

To come to Africa brought closure to a very rich and very difficult period of my life, which started in 1996 when I went through the initiations of the Minerval and First degrees in the Ordo Templi Orientis. These initiations were very powerful for me, and the teachings I received from my initiator very important. He told me how the sequence of initiations in the Order aimed at charging the adept with the magical energy of the elements, so for equilibrium's sake it was advisable to follow the entire process through.

The idea that our body is a talisman which can be charged, and the advice to balance the energies, became a cornerstone of my practice. After work with the first book of the *Lemegeton*, for instance, I used Enochian invocations to regain my equilibrium. Affected by a walk in a graveyard, I would swim in the ocean, or walk a mountain path through a forest. My initiator also commented that the water of the First Degree has the effect of washing away everything in the life of the initiate which does not conform with his or her True Will. What crossed my mind at that moment was that my marriage would be carried away by the waters. I was right.

I took both initiations on November 11th, and started 1997 crashed at a friend's house, waiting to be able to move to the new flat I had rented, after leaving my wife. The period after the separation was my first experience with solitude, and I came to enjoy it a lot. There were downsides, of course. I got really depressed and my finances went chronically into the red.

I had invested a large sum of money in Cabala books for the course I was presenting, an ambitious project of lectures scheduled to last for at least two years. It started with the History of old Israel and the formation of the Torah, followed by the teachings of the Neoplatonic schools, followed by the important philosophers Philo and Maimonides, all the way up to the Hekhalot literature and the rise of the Cabalists. I very much enjoyed giving these lectures, but the move to the new flat made me lose more than half of my students and made it difficult to get new ones.

On the magical side though, things were going better. My broken marriage had been very important to me because my ex-wife was decisive in the process of opening my magical perception, and now it was the time to start walking by myself. For a year I went with her to weekly Ayahuasca sessions. But, at the end of that year, I started to see that, although the Santo Daime tea had expanded my ability, it now had become the reason I could not go any further.

I say all this as a form of encouragement for others

Humberto Maggi

like me, who feel a burning desire for the magical path but start it without any ability at all to perceive the presence of the spirits and to feel and interact with magical energies. To acquire this was a process of many years for me, and a process I believe I only fully developed two days before I started to write this paper, with the invocation of the Seven Great Princes from the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses*.

The difficult period between my First and Second degrees was followed by a general betterment in every aspect of my life. As a friend commented, after the pains of the birth the time for the joys of life had arrived. It was a good time, but I remained unsatisfied with the life I was leading. I did not have the money I wanted to buy the books I needed, and lacked time and a proper place for my practices. Then the Third degree came, and a few months after that I was deep in Africa.

My acquaintances at the time believed this sudden change was the result of some experiments with the first book of the *Lemegeton*. I am not sure myself, because at the time I was doing a lot of different work. I received a phone call from a friend telling me another guy I knew ten years before in the Army was going to Angola to work, and he was travelling the next day. He came to see me at the bank branch I worked in and agreed to take my CV with him, a CV whose only recommendation to do a security job in a country divided by years of civil war was one year of military training done ten years previously. I got the job. At the weekend I suddenly remembered my father worked for the hiring company in the past, and it happened he knew the main manager in Angola.

The general feeling of my friends when I left Brazil for Angola was that I was crazy, if not suicidal. Far from it, I recognized this unique chance destiny offered, and was utterly excited. In the end, the only life threatening situation I faced was on leave back in Brazil: the cab driver took a wrong turn and we were graced with a shower of tracer ammunition from the favela nearby. Quite ironic and very enlightening.

Here I was able to settle down and immediately engaged in a systematic study of philosophy. It was an old idea of mine that you don't need to go to the university to become a philosopher – did Plato or Aristotle do so? I had studied for two years at a Catholic faculty of Theology before leaving my country, which was centered on philosophical studies – but now I decided I would undertake a complete reading course on the subject.

At this stage my practices were sporadic. I would do some meditation, eventually one or another ritual. Some practical results were good, and I discovered that telepathy is a true phenomenon. I had some astonishing occurrences of telepathy with my first and second wives, but during the years 2000 and 2001 I was in a relationship where it happened too frequently to be denied. The personal confirmation I got of the telepathic phenomenon became another cornerstone of my view of Magic. I realized that most of the practical results searched for through Magick can be narrowed down to the telepathic influence the magician exerts over other people, directly or with the aid of spirits. Just as when I got my wonderful job against all the odds.

Even the erratic and undisciplined way in which I indulged in the practices seems to have had an accumulative effect. My perception slowly increased, and one day something happened, a highlight in my magical life: a spontaneous and massive manifestation of the spirits of the first book of the *Lemegeton*. It was the strongest perception I had up to then, and I took

refuge for roughly an hour inside the circle, invoking the god Hrv as I watched the procession of the spirits calmly walking clockwise around me.

In November of 2004, three important things happened to me: I went to Zagreb to be initiated in the Third, Perfect Initiated and Knight of East and West degrees of the Ordo Templi Orientis, became a Probationer of the A∴A∴ in Rome, and went to the Abbey of Cefalù. Upon my return, I noticed an increase in my magical perception, and acquired some degree of the knowledge and conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel, and at the same time was accompanied by something very nice which followed me from Cefalù, another kind of spirit which I usually perceived with the colors of the Atu XX of the Thoth Tarot. However, these perceptions were still not strong enough to make me consider the spirits as truly independent and objective beings. It is not that I took the opposite position and found them to be creations of my mind in magical trance, useful tools to awaken my telepathy or to connect with my unconscious mind. When it came to practice, I engaged in the experiences as if they were objectively real; but outside the circle I always kept the caveat that the experiences I had were insufficient to prove anything.

The Probationer period I undertook lasted for two years. I developed enough contact with the Angel during this time to be able to listen to one of the very few direct pieces of advice He ever gave to me: to care no more about the A∴A∴ lineage I was in. By then, the A∴A∴ training had already served its purpose and changed my approach to magick, from that point on I began daily practice. My position regarding the true explanation of the magical phenomena around this time inclined even more to the subjective explanation of the spirits, and it was only in 2008 that I would be forced to elaborate for myself some kind of explanation that could acquiesce with the idea of the spirits really existing.

The Gordian knot of the question rested on the content of spirit communication. The proof of objective existence in any kind of communication is the supply of confirmable knowledge which cannot be attributed by any means to the subject himself. So, if you never visited my country and I gave you specific information which you can confirm if you go there, I have proved to you I am not a figment of your imagination, no matter if I emailed or sent my thoughts directly into your brain. On the other hand, if a spirit teaches you a new doctrine or a better magical technique, there is no way to prove for yourself the reality of the spirit based on the content – the spirit could be just a useful figure in your mind which allows you use your creativity, foresee events or move a pendulum in the right direction.

Even worse, the failure to prove the existence of the spirits through the content of the communication seems at first sight enough to disprove it. How is it possible that centuries of spirit conversations never proved the existence of the spirits?

In 2008 my attention fell upon the third book of the *Lemegeton*, the *Ars Paulina*. I tried the invocation of the Angel of the Ascendant of my horoscope, and the results surpassed even the spontaneous goetic manifestation of 2004. The only kind of comparison I can make is with a good dose of LSD, or with the effects of the Santo Daime. The disproportion between the cause and the effect – reading a simple text of invocation and almost instantly going into ecstasy – was strong enough to move the scales toward accepting the objectivity of the spirits, and now I had to come up with a

hypothesis to reconcile this experience with the lack of new and specific communication typical of the spirit's conversation. The idea I had was to consider the spirits as intelligences built solely upon energetic fields. These fields must be able to affect our nervous system directly to establish some kind of communication, affecting our sensations and our mental faculties.

The invocation of the Angel of the *Ars Paulina*, followed by thirty and seven invocations of different angels of the same book in 2008, and the three ceremonies to Hrv I performed in 2009, were until four days ago the summit of my magical life. These series of works put me in touch with higher levels of ecstasy, and the will to achieve again this ecstasy, even in higher levels, became my daily motivation, a kind of permanent sensation I carry with me all the time. They were completely surpassed by the goetic communion I received a few days ago, working with the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses*.

I came to work with the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* in a curious way. First of all, I had completely abandoned any kind of goetic work since 1994. Lack of a firm belief in the objectivity of the spirits made me underestimate the force and consequences of this kind of magick, and had contributed to some abuses and misuses in the past. My probation years in the A∴A∴ were a long adjustment with the spirits of the first book of the *Lemegeton*, and there was peace in my soul. My theurgic ecstasies and the practical application of the angelic magick made me conclude that goetic invocations were unnecessary and too dangerous.

By 2009 I was already developing a collector's and scholar's interest in the grimoire genre, the reason why in March I pre-ordered *The True Grimoire* by Jake Stratton-Kent. I received a note telling me that by 8th April the books were expected from the printers, to be numbered, consecrated and sent. This was true to the letter. The book was sent, it was numbered and it was definitely consecrated. I felt the book charged with some kind of green, strong but subtle energy. It made the reading difficult, because the energy put me in a mild trance state. After a few days I finished it.

I felt uneasy for some time after that, because I remembered consulting my friend and personal sibila Solange Stanquini, something I only do in serious matters. I suspected another source as the cause of my uneasiness, but her answer was simple and direct: it was caused by something I had made mine, and that came into my life to protect me. It took me some time to conclude it was the book, and at least on one occasion the *Verum* spirit Scirlin protected me and my house from unwanted influences.

Like that famous mage in his twenties, I was not meddling with the Goetia, but the Goetia was certainly meddling with me. The renewal of goetic work was enough to arouse a new interest on the subject, and as Scarlet Imprint had just re-launched *Howlings*, on 5th August I ordered a copy. I read the book non-stop, and realized I had something to write about the subject. I asked the publishers to tell me when they decided to launch a similar work, and I was very surprised with them kindly offering to wait one week to receive my submission, as the finalizing of *Diabolical* was under way.

I ordered my first edition of the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* on October 8th. It was a grimoire I was not used to, and its popular appeal did not rouse much interest from my part. The reasons why I purchased the book were: first, it was a Joseph H. Peterson edition (that means it was necessarily very good); second,

it was mentioned frequently in the excellent *Grimoires* by Owen Davies; and thirdly, the connection of the book with the Afro-American Traditions was of interest to me, since reading Jake Stratton-Kent's work. As a Brazilian, I grew up in an environment where the Umbanda and the Macumba are daily concerns. Brazilians are notorious for being a very Catholic population, as much as for resorting to the traditions of African origin any time the shit hit the fan. It is ironic that for most of the so-called Thelemic magicians in Brazil, that to sit at the feet of the Preto Velho or the Exus turns out to be the only really effective magical practice they experience. In this they follow a very long and respectable national tradition, which is to pray at the church and to ask for help at the terreiro, or at the crossroads.

I had to learn to value the Afro-American traditions. Because of their popularity, I had associated them with poverty, which seemed to me to be a proof of their inefficiency. I am a very book oriented person, and the predominance of the oral transmission also was an unappealing factor. I had to go through the studies on Shamanism, especially Mircea Eliade's work and Aaron Leitch's *Secrets*, to learn to appreciate them for what they are – a treasure trove of techniques and practical wisdom in the art of attaining ecstasy and dealing with the spirits. Free from the effects of the radicalization of the monotheistic discourse we see in the rise of Protestantism in Europe, the Afro-American Traditions remain complete; they have a comprehensive understanding which provides a place for all the different kinds of spirits, practices, initiations and devotions. In them, reality is not split and demonized.

The second reason I did not appreciate the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* was because it appeared to me as a miscellany of ill-copied, badly translated magical texts without internal coherency: and it is. For instance, the first *Sixth Book* comprises of a series of seven sigils with theurgic invocations, directed to the angelic hierarchies, bound together with the *Citations of the Seven Great Princes* which, to quote Joseph H. Peterson, is a Faustian text that *casts a sinister pall over the whole collection*. This amalgam of *white and black magic* (the *Sixth Book* presents itself as *Magia Alba et Nigra Universalis seu Necromantia*) must have contributed to the great popularity of the book, which travelled to America to become the main possession of immigrant hexmeisters, be adopted by Hoodoo practitioners and African American root workers, and then exported to the West Indies and West Africa.

It is easy to understand why traditions of African origin would feel at ease with this mix of theurgic and goetic practices. As I remarked above, these traditions, and also the traditions of Shamanism globally, present a unified view of the invisible otherness which magicians try to engage with in their practices. Here we find a proper place for every kind of spirit manifestation, where the opposition between Goetia and Theurgy does not exist.

The separation between Goetia and Theurgy in Western culture goes back to the Ancient Greeks, and crystallized itself in the *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* of Agrippa. But, if we go back and research the key treatise on Theurgy, *De Mysteriis*, we see its writer dealing with entities of every kind, from dæmons to gods, without splitting reality and demonizing the spirits.

Agrippa's distinction is clearly based upon Christian beliefs, and strongly influenced by Saint Augustine. For Agrippa, Goetia is: *unfortunate, by the commerces of unclean spirits made up of the rites of wicked curiosities, unlaw-*

ful charms, and deprecations, and is abandoned and execrated by all laws. After that he goes to define Theurgy, but his description seems ambiguous – for him: *many think that Theurgia is not unlawful, as if this be governed by good angels, and a divine deity, when as yet often times it is under the names of God, and the fallacies of evil angels obstringed by wicked fallacies of the devils*. Augustine is a witness to the separation made between Goetia and Theurgy, and there is nothing ambiguous in his radical assumptions, as we can see in his master work *The City of God*:

These miracles, and many others of the same nature, which it were tedious to mention, were wrought for the purpose of commending the worship of the one true God, and prohibiting the worship of a multitude of false gods. Moreover, they were wrought by simple faith and godly confidence, not by the incantations and charms composed under the influence of a criminal tampering with the unseen world, of an art which they call either magic, or by the more abominable title goetia, or the more honorable designation theurgy; for they wish to discriminate between those whom the people call magicians, who practice goetia, and are addicted to illicit arts and condemned, and those others who seem to them to be worthy of praise for their practice of theurgy, – the truth, however, being that both classes are the slaves of the deceitful rites of the demons whom they invoke under the names of angels.

Drawing distinctions between different kinds of spirits is of course as old as the first human experiences with them. The most common distinctions are derived from the threefold cosmology, which is considered to be characteristic of shamanic beliefs: spirits of the sky, spirits of the earth and spirits of the underworld. The heavens, the earth and the infernal places all had their hierarchies and their presiding gods, and the chthonic deities had preeminence in their practices for two reasons: sky gods were supposed to be more distant and less interested in humans affairs, and the chthonic world was the destination of the majority of humans souls. This kind of differentiation is also visible in the *De Mysteriis*, where the dæmons are much more involved with worldly affairs than the gods, often acting on behalf of them.

Then Christianity came, a religion based on the denial and condemnation of the world and focused exclusively on the afterlife. The Christian afterlife was a bit confusing: good Christian souls would go the heavens after death, but would also live again on the earth with a resurrected body in the future. Bad people, or even good non-Christians, would be locked and tortured forever and ever with, or by, the demons, and the only kind of spirit in existence besides the dead were angels: the good and the fallen.

There are differences between the spirits, attested to by people who interact with them, and not by Catholic or Protestant theologians who can't decide if they will interpret the Scriptures after Plato or after Aristotle, or the pious exorcists who call for God's help without properly explaining why God would now interfere in something He allowed to happen. The real differences between the spirits are sensed, they are perceived… and they are interpreted.

That is where the problem starts, in the interpretation. Interpretation requires parameters of classification, so it had to follow the cosmological pattern already accepted: sky, earth and underground. Christianity imposed over these categories, a division between the angels, and sometimes the fallen angels who were allotted to a kind of subterranean reign or sometimes thought to be free in the air. The Isagoge in

the *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy* mention this in one breath:

Peter the head of the Church, in the place before quoted, affirmeth them to be cast headlong into hell, reserved in the chains of hell, from whence (as Cortesius saith) they never go out, unless to tempt, provoke, and delude men. But Saint Augustine the champion of Christ, in his book of The Agony of a Christian, teacheth, that these kind of spirits do inhabit in the sublunary region. And in his 49 Epistle he sets forth, that the most dark and obscure part of the air, is predestinated unto them as a prison, that they may the more nearly cast their nets of enticing and detaining.

Nowadays we know better, the heavens are an optical illusion, blue skies made of air and beyond them the space filled with the same matter and energy we find here. The underworld has oil and lava, and if you go through it you will find yourself again on the surface, with air and space above you. This asks for a completely new interpretation of the spirits, because the dæmons are not in the soil and the angels do not orbit the planet. They are all here. In the same space filled with matter where we live.

Theologians who never saw an angel wrote long treatises to discuss matters relevant to the manufacture of pins, and every candidate seeking to become a magician was warned about the possibility of demons disguised as angels leading his unwary soul to the eternal pit. And, no matter how beatific your vision is after your own experience, there is still an endless supply of biblemongers with medieval mindsets to tell you that your angel must be a deceiving demon.

But I am talking about real experience: after having contact with dæmons and angels and elementals (and many others), there is no way the true magician will mistake them. It is like the sense of smell: to disguise your scent, you need another source of perfume. But we are talking about energy: so to be in an angel disguise, the demon would need to emanate an angelic odor which, of course, he doesn't have in the first place. This is the point I want to make: dæmons and angels are not under the earth or above the earth, rather they are meeting halfway in the temple of the magician, and the difference between them must be understood in a way analogous to the way we differentiate between wavelengths and frequencies. Spirits with a short wavelength or a lower frequency would be easier to sense, and would be naturally classified as earthy or chthonic. Longer wavelengths or higher frequencies would make more subtle contact and that would be associated by our ancestors with the air and the heavens.

There is a storm of information crossing the air and our bodies of which our senses are unaware, radio, TV, internet and cell phone waves, all you need is the proper machine to decode the information into what your senses can catch: light and sound. Understood in this way, all the ecclesiastic condemnations appear clearly for what they really were – the babbling of the pompous ignoramuses of old – and what we are left with is to discover the tools and the techniques to obtain the best encounter with the spirits.

The spirits come in many different forms, something the old grimoires tell us. There are amicable spirits, there are spirits wise and old, intelligent and sensible and, of course, spirits difficult to deal with, haters of men, exploiters, tempters and even murderers. We know this range of characteristics in our own human species, so we should not be surprised to find them elsewhere.

Jake Stratton-Kent once remarked that one day we can wake up to discover that, despite the centuries long argument over the topic Goetia versus Theurgy, we have all being doing Goetia all the time, pure and simple. And this is remarkably accurate, if we just realize that we communicate with dæmons and with angels using the same ability. The difference is just in the tuning, to the wavelength or the frequency desired. So, all the instructions we find in the grimoires have just these two aims: to attune the practitioner to the spirit he wants and to protect him if necessary. This explains the difference of methods, materials, etc. even contained in the same text.

We can find more elaborate and complete descriptions about the way humans perceive and react to the variety of the spirits outside the writing of the Christians. For a perfect example: let us take a close look at the description in the *De Mysteriis*:

I will, therefore, in a single statement lay down the proposition that the apparitions are in accord with their essences, powers and energies. For such as they are as such do they manifest themselves to those who are making the invocations; and they not only exhibit energies and forms which are characteristic of themselves, but they likewise display their own particular tokens. In order, however, to draw the distinctions minutely, this is the explanation: The spectral forms of the gods are uniform; those of the dæmons are diversified; those of the angels are more simple in appearance than those belonging to the dæmons, but inferior to those of the gods; those of the archangels approach nearer to the divine Causes; those of the archons – if those that have charge of the sublunary elements seem to thee to be the lords of the world – will be diversified but arranged in proper order; but if they are princes of the region of Matter, they will not only be more diversified but much more imperfect than the others; and those of the souls will appear in every kind of style.

In the *Epoptic Vision* the figures of the gods shine brilliantly; those of the archangels are awe-inspiring and yet gentle; those of the angels are milder; those of the dæmons are alarming. Those of the half-gods, although these are left out in your question, yet there should be an answer for the sake of the truth because they are more gentle than those of the dæmons. Those of the archons are terrifying to the beholders, if they are the archons of the universe; and hurtful and distressing, if they are of the realm of Matter. The figures of the souls are similar to those of the half-gods except that they are inferior to them.

Moreover, the figures of the gods in regard to size, aspect, external appearance and everything around them, are absolutely unchangeable. Those of the archangels are very near to those of the gods in these respects, but come short of being actually the same. Those of the angels are inferior to these, but are unchangeable. Those of the dæmons are seen in different shapes and appear great and small at different times; but the manifestations are the same. Those of the archons who are rulers are unchangeable, but the apparitions of those that belong to the realm of Matter are apt to change into innumerable forms. Those of the half-gods are like those of the dæmons, and those of the souls conform in no small degree to changeableness, peculiar to the dæmons.

Further still, to the gods there pertain order and tranquility; and with the figures of the archangels there exists a dramatic representation of order and quietude. With the angels there is present the disposition for order and peacefulness, but they are not free from motion. The figures of the dæmons are accompanied by

tumult and disorder. With those of the archons there are objects to be seen analogous to each class which we have already mentioned: those of the realm of Matter being borne along tumultuously. Those of the half-gods are constantly in motion and are never exempt from change, and those of the Souls resemble the figures of half-gods, but at the same time are inferior to them.

I find the lines attributed to Iamblichus very inspiring, because they agree with my own general experience in almost every point, and particularly my work with the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses*. But, the most important point here is that, no matter how much *alarming, hurtful and distressing* dæmons and some archons manifest themselves, they are an integral part of the metaphysical order and are not considered to be evil or fallen. These categories of spirits appear in *different shapes* and *great and small at different times*, being accompanied by *tumult and disorder* because this is how we perceive their energies: *alarming, hurtful and distressing* are less a description of the essence of the spirits than a confession of our reactions to them. And they have specific functions to fulfill in the schema of the *De Mysteriis*:

The nature of the dæmons and half-gods being thus derived from different sources, their essence is of necessity different. Thus that of the dæmons is effective of purposes, bringing to maturity the natures about the world, and exercising guardianship individually over those coming into existence. That of the heroes is life-sustaining, promotive of the reasoning faculty, and directive of souls.

The powers likewise may be defined accordingly. Those of the dæmons pertain to coming into existence and also to the oversight of the souls and of the connection of the souls with the bodies. It is also proper to assign to the heroes powers life-imparting, directive of human beings, and setting free from the nativity.

Even when the writer of the *De Mysteriis* compares the bad effects of the dæmonic presence to the health of the initiated to the influence exercised over him by other entities, there is not any reason for the dæmons to be considered evil for this. The matter is treated in a similar fashion as a scientist today would mention the effects of some mineral radiation on the human body – not an evil thing per se and probably with other useful applications.

Moreover, the benefits acquired from the manifestations, are neither all alike, nor do they have the same fruits. The advent of the god imparts to us health of body, virtue of soul, purity of mind, and indeed, to speak to the point, the leading of everything in us upward to its own first principles. It not only takes away the cold and destructive quality in us, but it augments the vital warmth and makes it more potent and predominant. It likewise brings everything into accord with the soul and mind. The light not only shines in the mental constitution, but it also exhibits that which is not body as body, to the eyes of the soul through those of the body.

The coming of the archangels likewise brings the same benefits, but it does not give them at all times, nor to all persons, nor such as are sufficient, or complete, or that may not be taken away; nor does the light shine in a manner equal to what is beheld at the manifestations of the gods. The presence of the angels dispenses benefits as if making a distribution of them, and the energy through which it is manifested comes far short of including in itself a perfect light. That of

the dæmons weighs down the body and chastens it with diseases, drags down the Soul into the realm of nature, and also fails to remove from bodies the sensibility born with bodies, detains in this region those who were hastening toward the fire, and does not set free from the bonds of Fate. The appearing of the half-gods is similar in various respects to that of the dæmons, but it differs in this respect, that it arouses the individual to noble and important deeds. The display of the cosmic archons at the autopsia imparts advantages of a general character and everything pertaining to the business of life; and that of the archons of the realm of matter extends benefits incident to the sphere of matter, and such works as pertain to the earth. Still further, moreover, the Vision of the Souls that are uncontaminate and established in the order of angels is elevating in its influence and salutary to the soul. It likewise imparts a sacred hope and bestows those benefits to which a sacred hope aspires. But the Vision of Souls of a different quality produces a tendency downward into the sphere of generated existence, corrupts the fruits of hope, and fills the beholders with perturbations that nail them fast to corporeal conditions.

The intermediary function of the dæmons described in the *De Mysteriis* is in every way analogous to the functions of the Exu or the Exus in the Brazilian traditions of African origins. Exus are messengers and executers to the Orixás, especially to Oxalá, and in the same way: the other, the race of dæmons, which is closely allied to the gods, yet is in a certain sense inferior to them, following as though it was not first in rank but accompanying in subservience to the good pleasure of the gods. This race causes the otherwise invisible goodness of the gods to become visible in operation, becoming itself both assimilated to it, and accomplishing perfect works that are like it. For then what was before unutterable in it is made capable of being uttered, what was without form is caused to shire forth in visible figures, whatever of it was beyond all reasoning is brought forth into plain words, and having already received the connate participation of beautiful gifts it bestows the same ungrudgingly, and transfers them to the races that rank after itself.

I have come to learn that I am receptive to the Exus' energies. There is an innate affinity that makes me feel at home when one of them is close. I feel the *Verum* allies as much more subtle and smooth, but I felt a certain similarity with the Exus' energies when I invoked the Seven Great Princes, one of the reasons why perhaps these two invocations surpassed everything I had felt previously. But the similarity was not deep – the Seven Great Princes seemed to me much more wise, experienced and strong.

The section of the *Books of Moses* named *Biblia Arcano Magicæ* give the following description to the Seven Great Princes. I am happy for not having read it before the invocations, so to not be influenced. They did not match my two first contacts with them.

Aziel is a very prompt treasure-spirit of the earth and of the sea. He appears in the form of a wild ox.

Ariel is a very serviceable spirit, and appears in the form of a ferocious dog. He commands the lost treasures of the land and sea.

Marbuel appears in the form of an old lion. He delivers the treasures of the water and the land, and assists in obtaining all secret knowledge and honors.

Mephistophiles is ready to serve, and appears in the form of a youth. He is willing to help in all skilled arts, and gives the spiritus Servos, otherwise called *familiares*. He brings treasures from the earth and from the deep very quickly.

Barbuel is a master of all arts and all secret knowledge, a great master of all treasure. He is very accommodating, and appears with alacrity in the form of a wild hog.

Aziabel is a prince of the water and mountain-spirits and their treasures. He is amiable, and appears with a large crown of pearls.

Aniquiel appears in the form of a serpent of Paradise. He confers great wealth and honors according to wish.

When it says that *the spirits will now appear quickly*, they do. Since I started working with the *Sixth Book* and its angelical invocations, I dropped my habit of making rituals derived from the Lesser Ritual of Pentagram for the method of prayer: I recite the first section of the Greater Invocation to be found in *Magick Book Four* or the first section of *Liber Samekh* to consecrate my Ring of Æmeth, put on the ring and then move to the invocations or the citations. What I definitively never do is to follow this kind of advice that the book provides:

Since the spirits will now appear quickly, bring your desires forward honestly, as if before your fellow-man, without fear, for nothing can harm you, much rather, all must serve you and yield obedience and serve you according to your wishes. In this connection, be careful that you do not compromise in any degree with the spirit for all this power, and word of might, which Moses, Aaron and Solomon used according to the revelations of God, are sufficient to compel the spirits to reveal to you the treasures of the earth and sea, and to give them to you without harm and deception.

To consider that the spirits *must serve you and yield obedience* and must be *compelled to reveal the treasures* is to fall back to the split Christian view which demonizes the spirits to justify the oppression of the magician. It is exactly the same kind of theological argument used in the past to justify slavery promoted by the Europeans: conquered populations were considered soulless or in a stage of spiritual unenlightenment which justified the oppression. Now, after the same fashion, in the Christian tainted traditions of Magick the spirits are supposed to be fallen angels – so you can do whatever you want as long God backs you up.

I very politely and respectfully invited one by one of the Seven Great Princes to have knowledge and conversation with me, and they did. Each citation was quickly followed by a very strong manifestation conducting to the most powerful ecstasy I experienced up to now; I can only compare it to taking a large dose of LSD. When I asked the Tarot on the Sunday about doing my weekly invocation of the Three Chief Spirits of *Verum*, and about trying for the first time the Citations of The Seven Great Princes, the answers were Atu X – The Wheel of Fortune, and the Nine of Cups – Pleasure. I do not know if one work was related to the other – I am not very adept at mixing the hierarchies of different grimoires – but the invocations of Monday and Tuesday were strongly marked by pleasure. The contacts with the Seven Great Princes were inebriating, and long, and full of knowledge and wisdom. When one departed, the ecstasy disappeared and I changed

the sigils. Soon after I finished a citation, the next spirit soon manifested, and the pattern repeated itself, although with specific features for each spirit.

I will transcribe the notes I took during the two sessions. I wrote the notes of the first invocation afterwards, but on Tuesday I took the notes right after the citation of each Great Prince.

Did my first invocation of the Seven Princes. It was the best Goetic work I ever did… Very strong manifestation & presence. Also very pleasurable. I got into an ecstatic state deeper & more stable than before.

I realized during the experience that I had become a bit too focused in my life in attaining theurgic ecstasies. The Princes helped me to open and manifest my own energy. It emanated strongly, especially from my back.

I invited one by one the Princes to have knowledge & conversation with them, and asked them to help me to develop my ability of spiritual communication. They showed me that the ability to have visions happens in one part of the mind, but the ability to hear voices happens in an other part of the mind, and began to activate it for me.

I felt the energy of the goddess Mictecacihuatl inside me when one of the Princes exerted pressure with his energy on me. I felt the energy of Mictecacihuatl as a mark and a protection She left on me.

The reference to the Lady of the Dead, the Aztec goddess Mictecacihuatl, happened because of another magical work I initiated, after deciding to work for the first time with Necromancy. The inspirations for the work have being coming to me during my invocations with the *Sixth Book*. In fact, inspiration seems to be the strong point up to now with this part of the grimoire. I followed the inspirations received during my daily practices with it, which enabled me to determine the characteristics of the necromantic work to be done, and the identification of Mictecacihuatl as its patron deity. On the 30th March, during the practices, she manifested in a subtle way and asked me to offer Her my bones, which I did. She left her energy inside me, and after that I felt much better, less heavy. When one of the Princes was exerting energetic pressure on me, the energy given by the goddess activated for a moment. I felt like I was marked and under her protection.

The next day, 5th April, I had two ideas; I had been waiting for four months for the De Laurence edition of the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* to arrive, now it was supposed to have been received in the company headquarters in Luanda, so I decided to first scry and then consecrate the book, doing one by one all the invocations and citations.

At night I went through a mild trance reading a chapter of the *Voudon Gnostic Workbook* by Bertiaux, and after that prepared to repeat the Citations of the Seven Great Princes. This time I took notes between the citations. I transcribe the notes below, but it is not possible to recreate in words the wonder of the experience, which was even stronger than the first time.

Aziel Appeared first as a Serpent Spirit. He showed me how to start to develop my Wrathful Form.

Ariel Water energy. Eagle. Forced gently his energy against me, making my own energy manifest.

Marbuel He was more hard towards me, more difficult, but in the end I perceived the hard treatment was aimed at making me a better men, and also to free

my mind. I had a brief vision of him as a strong man wearing period clothes of the 17th century. He took me under his tutelage.

Mephistophiles A Toad, later a Black Dog and then a Man. I felt like the forms in which the spirits manifest have something to do with their energy patterns, they are not random and they are a means to communicate something. He was very strong, perhaps the strongest manifestation of magical force I have experienced. He was seductive to me. He wanted to show that Magick is real. In fact, the display of energy was so strong that my reasonable doubts are fading away.

Barbuel White Bird. It was brief. He showed me this practice is a step, I will move forward after that.

The Princes are always testing, and know men very well.

Aziabel Unbelievable. A great burst of energy arose from me, followed by the first awakening of the kundalini in my life. The ecstasy surpassed everything I have known up to now.

Aniquiel More subtle, worked to help me achieve a better silence in my mind. A spirit of silence. Silence as a still state of energy.

Marbuel is the third spirit with whom I established some kind of formal relationship, the other two being Astaroth and Beelzebub. My relationship with Astaroth is defined by the word *Disciple* and my relationship with Beelzebub by the word *Lover*.

On Wednesday 6th, almost at midnight, I undertook one more round of invocations, but this time the Princes did not manifest themselves. It was only in the second citation that I noticed that the subtle presence was again that of the spirits of the *Sixth Book*. I changed the sigils accordingly, and restarted the practice. The first five spirits Och, Phuel, Tehor, Anoch and Scheol all gave me ideas for the writing of this paper, and the quote at its beginning was a conclusion I reached during the invocation of Scheol. I was also in doubt about choosing an Elder or a Hazel wand, and the sixth spirit, Alymon, advised me to obtain both: Hazel to work with goetic spirits, Elder to work with the angels. The seventh spirit, Ahael, in the end revealed to me that my highest ecstasy will come from Hrv.

The results I have experienced allow me to draw these conclusions. After the ecstasy itself in the invocation of the Seven Great Princes and the lessons received, I realised the apparent lack of proportion between the cause and the effects – reading a short citation in front a sigil and going into a very strong, coherent and ecstatic series of goetic communions – is for me a very strong indicator for the objective existence of the spirits. There was not a crescendo of ecstasies through time, no alteration of my daily routine (I fasted as usual on the Sunday, but ate regularly on the Monday and Tuesday), and no use of any entheogen. I meditate regularly and though it is very important training to focus the mind in spirit communications, it was not meditation which put me into these trances.

The other important feature was the focus of the communications in the awakening of my own energies. I was a bit uncomfortable with my dependency on the spirits and gods to furnish the necessary energy to experience ecstasy. The angels I contacted previously

were always careful to avoid this, but I kept longing constantly since 2008 to renew these ecstasies. The Seven Princes showed me that I have a repository of wonderful energies inside myself. I have to praise my wife. Much of the pre-conditions necessary to receive the gift of these communions were created in our conversations about Santeria, Vajarayana Buddhism and through her experiments with Reiki. Aziel's instruction about manifesting the energy in my own Wrathful Form, for instance, and the whole subject on emission of energies have been frequent topics in our conversations and experimentations across the worlds.

OPEN UP THE GATE

THE CROSSROADS is the magical symbol of ingress and egress between the worlds, par excellence. Virtually every culture in the world recognizes the crossroads as a holy site associated with magic, witchcraft and strange transitions into the beyond. The lore of the crossroads as a place of power stretches from the medieval hysteria of the witches sabbat, with its lurid fantasies of wanton scantily clad ladies cavorting with Satan and his legion of saucy imps; to the 20th century mythology of Robert Johnson, selling his soul to the devil in return for virtuoso guitar skills. The annals of folk magic are littered with references to the crossroads as a site where spells are performed or where the materials of witchcraft are deposited after sorceries have been worked. A place where jars filled with charmed items may be buried, candle stubs may be left, or dirt itself may be gathered for use in any number of strange enchantments.

The crossroads was often used as a location for places of execution, under the understanding that the souls of the dead may more easily pass onto the afterlife if their lives were taken at such a spot. In 16th century London, the Tyburn Tree was erected at the meeting of roads now occupied by Marble Arch. A place of mass execution where up to 24 condemned criminals could be hanged at any one time. A murder factory of previously unimagined precision and efficiency, where vast crowds of spectators would gather to watch infamous highwaymen and assorted scoundrels dispatched into hell from the terrible branches of the hanging tree. Soil from the foot of the gallows was prized by magicians as a powerful ingredient, and even the wife of Charles I is said to have prayed at the foot of the tree and gathered a handful of magic dirt.

The crossroads is frequently the location for sightings of unexplained phenomena. Apocryphal tales abound of phantom hitchhikers loitering at the mysterious boundary between worlds and occasionally thumbing a ride with unsuspecting motorists, only to blink out of existence a few miles up the road. Countless legends have survived of ghostly black dogs that are said to haunt the English countryside, commonly sighted at ancient and isolated crossroads far from urban activity. Almost every county in the land has its own stories of the terrifying hell hounds that stalk in lonely places where old roads meet, from the ancient Shagfoal of Northampton to Black Schuck of East Anglia. Strange cargo from places unknown. Spectral passengers bleeding through from another world.

The crossroads is a thin place. A liminal zone poised between possibilities. When you arrive at a place where many roads meet you must ultimately make a decision about which path you will choose to follow. Apart from the activities of witchcraft and public execution, there is little else that you can do at a crossroads other than pick a road and go down it.

In this sense, the physical crossroads itself is a magical symbol representing all of the choices we may be presented with in life. From simple acts like selecting a route to get to work on a morning, or deciding what type of sandwich to eat for lunch. To major life deci-

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sions, like getting married, having children or relocating to another city. In any circumstance where we must exercise choice, we find ourselves metaphorically standing at the crossroads.

Even our smallest decisions can have a massive impact on the shape of our lives: selecting the wrong route to work might see us hit by a bus, choosing the wrong sandwich might see us choking on a fishbone. Or conversely, the insurance from the accident might finance a lifelong dream, or we might be rescued from choking by someone we will end up happily spending the rest of our lives with. The crossroads is unpredictable. Every choice we make could have profound impact on the course of our lives. These are the mysteries of the crossroads. The roads we choose, the choices we make, the avenues we explore, the paths we overlook, the ways that are blocked and the ways that are open.

A physical crossroads is like a living storehouse of this potentiality. One of the doctrines of sympathetic magic, essential to understanding hoodoo conjure, is that sites within the landscape become imprinted with the history of what has taken place there. A site used for worship of varying kinds over the space of a thousand years soaks up something of that religiousity and the very ground itself becomes holy. A plague pit, prison house or the site of a terrible murder takes on the aspect of the sorrow and misery that has been suffered in its enclosure. The site of an old hospital, cemetery, financial district, battlefield, marketplace, red light district, theatre, factory or farm, each carry the signature of their history and use.

This psychogeographical imprinting is especially important to the magic of the crossroads, which seems to function almost like a magnet for the histories and mysteries of its surrounding area. A knot in the road that has soaked up something of the lives and stories, trials and experiences of the countless travellers that have walked down the various streets and paths that wind their way to the crossroads.

The layout of roads and their intersection often remains a constant from generation to generation, especially in older cities. For instance, many of the streets and crossroads in London date back to the original Roman settlement, some even enjoying an earlier prehistoric origin. The modern city roads still following the same course and arriving at the same old junctions. The ancient processional routes of man that we continue to tread, weathered pathways heavy with the footsteps of our distant ancestors that echo and reveberate still. If we stand at the crossroads and know how to listen, we can hear them. We can tune into the flavour of a place, hear its accent, taste its personality and savour its nature. A crossroads is a living nexus in the landscape that can function as a direct route into the power of the land itself, its secrets and its spirits.

The symbol of the crossroads has been utilised in the divine lexicon of cultures, peoples and traditions too numerous to catalogue. In Haitian Vodou, the symbol represents the interplay of spirit and matter. The horizontal line of the cross represents the visible physical world, while the vertical line represents the invisible world of les mysteres that penetrates and permeates all things. It is a symbol of the condition of reality itself, the symbiotic relationship that exists between humans and the Lwa, and is therefore central to all religious rites and magical operations. A physical crossroads is a place that encapsulates this mystery, and is often the preferred site for ceremonies, celebrations, services and quiet conversations with the gods. The veil between worlds is thin at such a place, and the Lwa

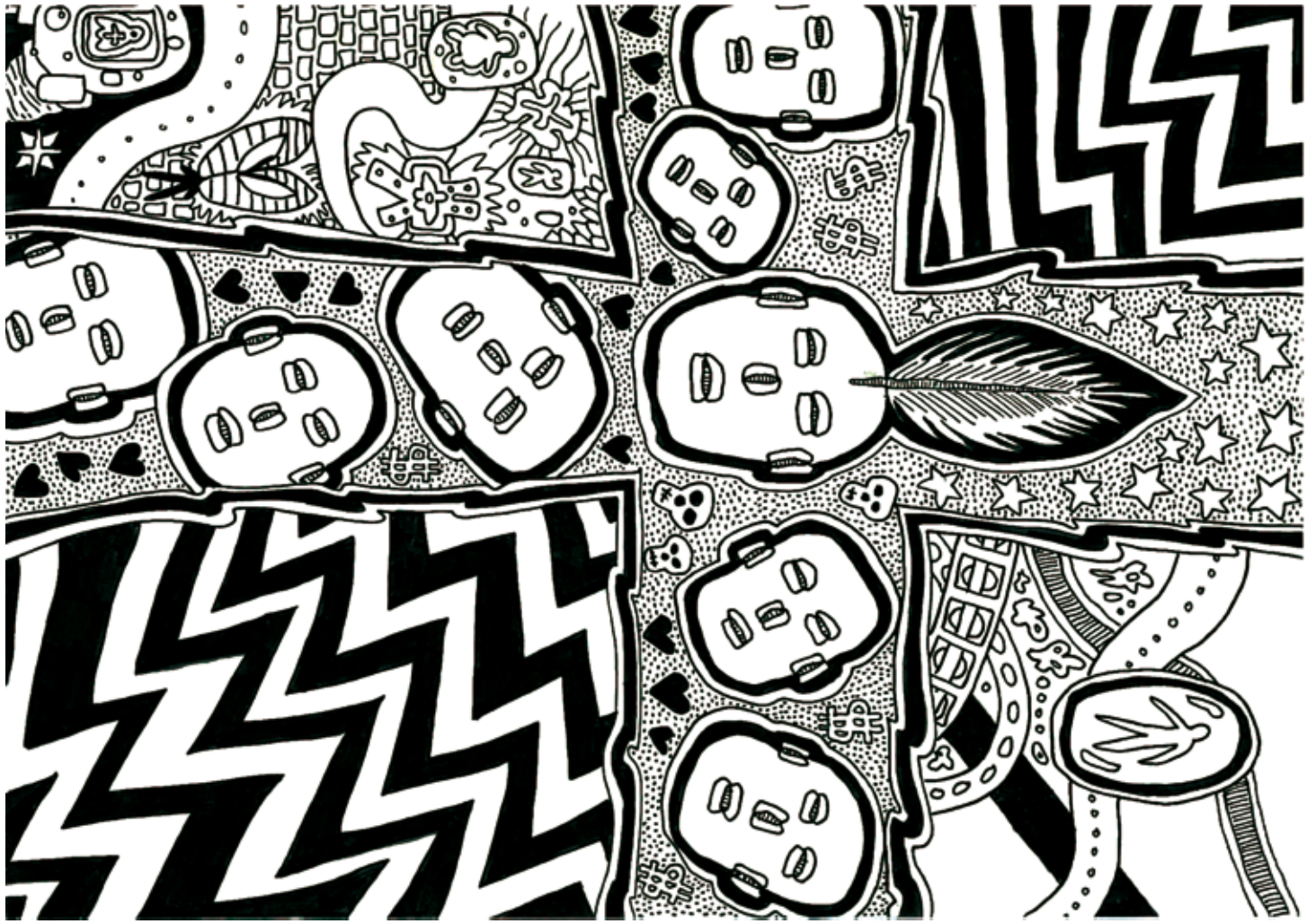
can be readily called upon, with only a thin membrane of watery mirror separating our reality from theirs.

The god of the Crossroads, Papa Legba, is of primary importance in Voodoo as it is he who stands at this midway point and controls the traffic between worlds. He is the gatekeeper, charged with the task of mediating communications between gods and men, and he is called on at the beginning of every Voodoo ceremony to open up the gate, fathom the mirror, remove the barrier between worlds, and make magical dialogue with the Lwa possible. If Legba doesn't get his due, most frequently an offering of rum, tobacco and candy, then no messages will get through and no communication can take place.

Legba is a patron of magicians, as all operations of magic ultimately take place under the auspices of the crossroads. It is up to Legba whether the roads of opportunity will be opened or closed in any given situation, therefore the outcome of all sorcery is dependent on his good favour. A spell could be considered a message sent to the universe, with Legba the divine postman ensuring that such enchanted communiqués are sorted at the crossroads and delivered to their destination. Things get lost in the post all the time, especially if there is an error in the address or if you have failed to attach the correct postage. Therefore, acts of magic performed with Legba's direct involvement or under his watchful eye, are tantamount to paying for a first class registered delivery. If you are tight with Legba, the messages you send stand a greater chance of getting through. The postman is no longer a faceless agency operating behind the scenes, but a Lwa who you interact with on a regular basis. Sorcery performed without the direct participation of the crossroads powers is like sending smoke signals and hoping they will be noticed. Work done at the crossroads is equivalent to engaging the services of a courier to ensure your message arrives at its destination.

He is the master of paths, controlling all of the roads that lead to and from the crossroads, and in this aspect he is a patron of travellers and journeys. He can be called upon for safe travel, and to ensure that journeys go as planned, be they excursions into physical or magical landscapes. He would be called upon at the start of any important expedition or faring forth, especially those that might incur an element of risk. Sometimes a magician might have need to enter into alien territory ruled over by non-human forces, such as a trip to the boneyard where the living are a conspicuous presence, or a journey into the dark woods where other strange forces rule and have their sway. Legba can admit us to such places. He can open up the gateway between worlds, protect us on our journey and ensure our safe return when business is taken care of. It is essential that we go with Legba's blessing and travel under his auspices, if we want such diplomatic missions to be well received. With Legba's patronage we can walk between worlds, and journey to places way off the map. Hidden cities and eternal kingdoms, secret landscapes, foreign territories, and sideways towns. Legba holds the keys to every gateway and knows the route to every land.

As the great communicator, Legba can be asked to translate for us when we enter into such unfamiliar environments and wish to converse with the denizens we might find there. Travelling alongside Legba is like having all of your papers in order and the company of an experienced guide who knows the terrain and is recognised and respected by all the locals. If you wish to get to know any deity, spirit or divine agency, Legba



can get you an introduction. He is the principle of communication itself, and even the gods must carry messages to one another via the crossroads.

A good relationship with Legba is essential for anyone who wishes to build relationships with the wider mysteries, as all such conversations fall within his domain. If something is out of balance in your dealings with Legba, you may find yourself on shaky ground when you try to converse with any of the other Lwa – especially those who you have not had extensive business with in the past, and in whose court you have not built up a firm foundation of trust. But if you are on good terms with Legba, then you have his patronage for such endeavours and he can teach you how to best approach the mysteries of the other Lwa. How to conduct yourself on their territory, avoid unintended breaches of etiquette and leave a good impression. With Legba onside you are no longer blundering uninvited into a stranger's house party, but you go in good company under Legba's plus one invite.

Such rights of admission have to be earned. Nothing ever comes for free, and the first task of a sorcerer is to get into the good books with Legba, as it is your standing in his court that enables you to get on about the rest of the work and operate within the framework of Voodoo. If you don't have that in place, you are not equipped for business. Your standing at the crossroads is the pivotal, number one, totally essential thing to sort out in this work. Without the patronage of Legba – or one of the many other faces of the Crossroads, depending on which crew you are riding with – you're access beyond the ground floor is limited.

The crossroads is a trickster. Just as Legba can take care of us when we are on the road, he can also communicate his displeasure by blocking our path or disrupting our journeys to and from. If you are involved with Legba and notice a striking number of disruptions to your travel – unlikely hold-ups, blocked paths, and mounting inconveniences – it is often a clear sign that Legba is trying to get your attention. In many instances, this is his way of instructing us, literally stopping us in our tracks and making us think more closely about our recent actions. In some instances it may be an expression of his annoyance at some transgression that has been committed, but more often than not such disruptions function as a heads-up. An advance warning that something is getting out-of-balance and that we urgently need to check our behaviour to prevent greater dilemma than a ruined journey. If you have a relationship with Legba, and you are experiencing persistent travel difficulties or breakdowns in communication, it's a nod that you need to speak to him without delay to try and ascertain what the problem area might be.

The Lwa communicate with us through such worldly occurrences and each with their own unique signature. With experience in these matters, you learn to recognise not just when you are being spoken to, but who is doing the talking. A disrupted journey, a missing passport, faulty lines of communication, packages gone astray in the post, lost keys and stolen phones are all characteristic omens from Legba. They are not to be seized on as fuel for paranoia about molestation by supernatural entities, but read as an early warning signal that something is up. There's a cat amongst the pigeons, a fly in the soup, a wolf in sheep's clothing, or a bastard in the kitchen. You are most likely complicit, or just plain responsible for the issue at hand and Legba wants you to put it right. He's calling on us to sort our business out, and the most effective way for him to get our attention is to fuck with us a bit, as that

generally makes people sit up and take notice. The Lwa have been trafficking with humans for a long time, and they know how to press our buttons when they need to get a message across.

Legba is the storyteller, the wanderer who sits by the campfire and weaves a remarkable tale that grabs us by the wrist and takes us on a journey. He can wind an uncanny yarn to captivate and enthral, a tall tale to lift us from the mire and reveal new vistas of perspective; or he can show us a truth we are unprepared for, a naked candour to chill us in the night. Legba speaks of things that we can feel in our gut, his stories are creation songs that open new roads and bring us to the threshold of possibility.

Stories make the world go round, and narrative is the fuel for human enterprise. All we see around us is conditioned by narrative. Each City tower block was once a spark in the mind of an architect, writing their own imagined pattern into the concrete fabric of our habitat. The clothes on our back were conjured out of dreams by an artist, painting a vision on the canvas of everyday appearance. The food on our plate is determined by stories rattling around in the heads of restaurant critics and TV chefs. Our wallets are stolen because of tales that thieves whisper to themselves in dark corners of Soho. We inhabit our fictions and they live through us. Magic is a spell, a grammar, a song and a seduction.

A Magician is a master storyteller, and Legba is the most formidable of them all. He is the patron of all those who seek to dream the future into being. Every Magician ultimately has to cast a spell, weave a narrative, speak a word that vibrates through time. We are at the mercy of these tales, caught up in dead men's magic, at the sway of torrential forces set in motion by forgotten sorcerers long ago. What enchantments have you under their influence? Whose long game are you unwittingly bringing to fruition? What got into you and made you want to pick up this book? Perhaps a legend or a folk tale, subtle and delicious, that crept into your heart when you were young and got you hooked on the oldest game. What strange magic got into me and made me put down these words? Seduced me to a life of endless summer days in adoration of nature's beauty, visionary nights beneath a waxing Moon, pounding drums, sex with witches, black candles, voices from beyond, champagne by the river, and handfuls of dirt at the crossroads.

Whose magic are we working and how far back does it go? The storyteller's fire, kept alive through generations of Victorian Grand Magi, Master Therions, table-tappers and spook mentalists. Through ranks of Haitian witchdoctors, New Orleans Voodoo Queens, two-headed doctors and conjure men. The witch on the edge of town, the crow-man decorated in feathers and fixing troubles with a tattered umbrella, the ghost doctor whispering to a bone familiar, the oldest magic, the original spell. Here we find Legba, crouching at the crossroads, tending the campfire and weaving his tale, giving us the threads to sew in whatever pattern we will. This tapestry of becoming, woven out of the loose threads of our lives.

We live within a tangled mesh of narratives that swarm around us like a kaleidoscopic prism, it's texture and design growing ever more monstrous as our species develops into its inevitable shape. What choice do we have but to participate in this process? Write a few lines of our own to try and buck the trend of the narrative in whichever way we are compelled. If we cast our glamour well enough we can dictate the flow

of the whole story. If our tale is well told it will be an irresistible temptress, seducing and enchanting down the centuries. Once a pattern is in motion, it cannot be unravelled. But a single stitch, expertly embroidered, can suggest a new direction that will change the shape of the whole design.

Every choice, every action, every spell and conjuration, every wish and every prayer is a stitch in time – a knot in the Web of Wyrd, an embellishment on the pattern of creation. Here we find magic, an exquisite corpse that awaits our attention. An unfinished story waiting to be taken up by a likely trickster, crouching at the crossroads and tending the fire, with a sack of yarn and a glint in their eye.

This article is an extract from Stephen Grasso's forthcoming book *Dub Seance*.

COUNTERMEASURES

THE MAGIC OF THE NEW WORLD is truly one world magic. With the advent of the internet and instant availability of even the most obscure wisdom literature, there are no longer borders between magical traditions. We grimoire Magicians are enabled to practice Santeria alongside Solomonic magic. We are not limited to the traditions of our own heritage, culture or geography, and the potential for evolution and ascension has never been greater. The Enochian Magus is free to teach his craft to the Palero whilst simultaneously learning from the Conjure Man. With this new world also comes the potential to be blighted, cursed and crossed in any number of ways.

I recently received a worried email from a reader requesting guidance. The reader, formerly a member of a now defunct magical order, had run afoul of some of his brethren. He believed himself to now be the subject of their malefic magic. A large majority of those believing themselves to be cursed, or the target of baneful magick, are just in the midst of a period in their lives most eloquently described by my former teacher as 'When Shit Happens.' Despite this, I elected to spend a day or so with my correspondent as he lives in nearby Connecticut, if for no other reason than to help put his mind at ease. I didn't believe there was much to be done magically, but in most cases where friends of mine are down and out due to the aforementioned 'shit happening,' I've found that a night out at a bar can in and of itself work wonders. Having arrived and spent a few hours with him, toured his home and hometown and treated him to an evening at one of the area's bars, I was absolutely convinced that his fears were in fact well founded and he had been targeted by his former comrades, or other persons of equally ill intent.

While some would have you believe that it is inconceivable that any successful practitioner would engage in magic of a harmful or destructive nature for fear of 'karma' or in dread of reaping what they have sown, this is a fallacy. Also foolish is the belief that those who do not believe in the power of magic are protected from it by that disbelief. Some modern practitioners teach that any harm done by malefic magic is done by allowing the target to know that they are being attacked, thus placing them in a position to create a self-fulfilling prophecy, this is also untrue. The deadliest of magical attacks are those of which the target is completely unaware. Furthermore, it does not take an advanced Magus to cause harm with magic. In truth, one who has mediocre experience can work malefica without much difficulty, as was the case here. What separates the malefic of the experienced from the amateur is the marksmanship. A more advanced practitioner would have methodically evaluated the weaknesses of his mark and crafted a precision working to exploit that weakness and thereby destroyed him. It is the difference between the precisely placed 168 grain boat tailed hollow-point round of a sniper with a Remington 700 rifle versus a street thug with an assault rifle spraying rounds in every direction and hoping one of them strikes its target. While the magic of an inexperienced and less learned practitioner may not be as precise or deadly as that of a master, his 'spray

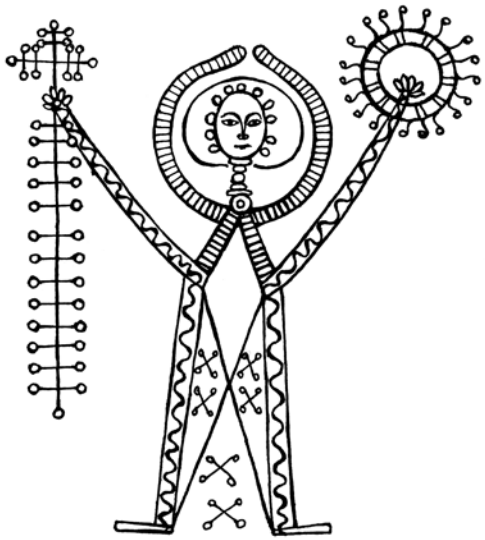
Michael Cecchetelli

and pray' approach can inflict enough small wounds to cause ongoing problems.

The work aimed at my friend was amateur hour; it was evident to me that those responsible had simply opened countless books containing curses and malefica from any given tradition, and thrown at him each of them of which they were capable, and probably some of which they were not. As a result, he was done no serious injury, nor any lasting harm, but a truly infuriating number of small annoyances were plaguing him. Any one of these attacks would, on its own, be akin to a mosquito bite, and the larger of them like unto the sting of a bee. He was however, being swarmed simultaneously by the entire hive. The curses aimed at him appeared to be an illogical amalgamation of any number of magical works from as many traditions as the attackers had recourse to. The methodology by which I dealt with this was, on the contrary, syncretic; I deliberately fused protective magics from different cultures rather than reaching for a grab bag of random techniques.

Because the ills caused by this attack had permeated every aspect of the life of our dear afflicted friend, it was necessary to be comprehensive in cleansing his Kingdom and equally so in establishing defenses.

The first steps we took in reversing this young man's fortune and removing the negative influences from his life were drawn from the New Orleans style of Conjure.[1] We began in both the day and hour of Jupiter,[2] dressing white candles with uncrossing oil, then simultaneously burning them and fumigating the entirety of the his home with uncrossing powder incense.[3] Traditionally, this aspect of our work would have involved a seven day ritual, but having neither the time nor the other oils and material called for, the classical rites were redacted.



Following the fumigation of his home, we created a Conjure Hand consisting of saltpeter, sulfur, and lemongrass. Within the red silk bag[4] of the Conjure Hand was placed this image, drawn by the afflicted, using uncrossing oil mixed with red ink.

The drawing I chose to include in the Conjure Bag is from London Oriental Manuscript 5525. It was originally used as a protective amulet to be consecrated by way of the rite which we used subsequently and kept on the person, conveying them the protection and favor of the highest.

The following day in the 3rd hour of Venus I commenced the second part of the work. Whilst the work of the day before was intended to break the curse and malediction and to cleanse his castle of harmful influences, the present work was intended to exorcise him and his surroundings, commanding the departure of any hostile spirits. The rite chosen for this purpose is

from the Stele of Jeu, PGM V 96–172, and is known as the Invocation of the Headless One.

I invoke you, Headless One (ἀκέφαλος)*, who created earth and heaven, who created night and day, who created light and darkness. You are Osoronnōphris* (Οσορονναφρις)*, whom no one has ever seen. You are Iabas* (Ἴαβας)*. You are Iapōs* (Ἴαπως)*. You distinguished the just and the unjust. You made female and male. You revealed seed and fruits. You caused people to love each other and to hate each other.*

I am Moses your prophet to whom you have transmitted your mysteries celebrated by Israel. You revealed the moist and the dry and all nourishment. Hear me!

I am the messenger of Pharaoh Osoronnophris; this is your true name which has been transmitted to the prophets of Israel. Hear me, ARBATHIAŌ REIBET ATHELEBERSĒTH ARA BLATHA ALBEU EBENPHCHI CHITASGOĒ IBAŌTH IAŌ. *Listen to me and turn away this daimon.*

I call upon you, awesome and invisible god with an empty spirit, AROGOGOROBRAŌ SOCHOU MODORIŌ PHALARCHAŌ OOO. *Holy Headless One, deliver him, NN, from the daimon which restrains him.* ROUBRIAŌ MARI ŌDAM BAABNABAŌTH ASS ADŌNAI APHNIAŌ ITHŌLĒTH ABRASAX AĒŌŌU; *mighty Headless One, deliver him, NN, from the daimon which restrains him.* MABARRAIŌ IOĒL KOTHA ATHORĒBALŌ ABRAŌTH, *deliver him, NN,* AŌTH ABRAŌTH BASUM ISAK SABAŌTH IAŌ.

He is the lord of the gods! He is the lord of the inhabited world! He is the one whom the winds fear! He is the one who made all things by the command of his voice.

Lord, King, Master, Helper, save the soul, IEOU PUR IOU PUR IAŌT IAĒŌ IOOU ABRASAX SABRIAM OO UU EU OO UU ADŌNAIE, *immediately, immediately, good messenger of God* ANLALA LAI GAIA APA DIACHANNA CHORUN.

Subject to me all daimons, so that every daimon, whether heavenly or aerial or earthly or subterranean or terrestrial or aquatic, might be obedient to me and every enchantment and scourge which is from God

I am the headless daimon with my sight in my feet, the mighty one with the immortal fire; I am the truth that hates the fact that unjust deeds are done in the world; I am the one who makes the lightning flash and the thunder roll; I am the one whose sweat falls as rain so that it can inseminate the earth; I am the one whose mouth burns completely; I am the one who begets and destroys; I am the Favor of the Aeon! My name is a heart encircled by a serpent. Come forth and follow!

Immediately following this invocation, whilst still enflamed by the spirit of the Headless One, it falls to the Magus to issue a command to all offending and hostile spirits, speaking with the voice of the God, ordering them to leave the place and cease their acts against the victim. The victim's forehead was anointed using Abramelin Oil,[5] and both he and his home were asperged with Holy Water.[6]

Had the victim of this curse reached the level of practice where contact is made with his Holy Guardian Angel, this exorcism would have been preceded by an evocation and an earnest entreaty for the Angel to remain steadfast throughout the rites to come, but as he had not reached that point, it was foregone in favor of a general prayer to the source of all, the unnamed one from whom all gods and goddesses have descended.

In the fourth hour of Venus we commenced the establishment of defenses around the victim, which is done first with an incantation from the same London Oriental Manuscript 5525 that the figure was drawn from.

I adjure you by your name and your power, by your figure and

your amulet of salvation and the places where you dwell! By your light wand in your right hand and the light shield in your left, and by the great powers which stand before you! I adjure you, do not hold back and do not ignore, but descend unto me and unto your amulet of salvation!

Watch and protect the body and the soul, the spirit and the house of N. son of N, and his loved ones as well! Bring to them life yearly, without any disease! Cast forth from them every evil force and never allow them to approach them! Cast forth from them every demon and every devil, and every Apalaf and Aberselia, and every power of darkness and evil eye, and every eye shutter and chill!

Cast them away from N. and from his family, from his dwelling and children!

OHI SHAOHI SHASHAOHI SHAIHI SHA AAAO OOOOOOO

Protect and shelter him, by IAO, by Sabaoth! By the Archangels Michael and Gabriel! By IAO and Sabaoth, Adonai and Elohim, Elemas Miksanther and Abrasax, by Michael and Gabriel, Raphael and Suriel, by Raguel and Asuel and Saraphuel, I adjure you by your holy powers, Watch and protect N.

Thalalmelal, Kokalthaal, Maalbuk, Ananias Setra, Asarias, Misak, MisaelAbdenako, Chesenaethi, Chersospaethi, Hilelmilel, Michor!

IIIIIIIAAAAAAAOOOOOOO
IIIIIIAAAAAAOOOOOO
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IAO

Following this portion of the rite, incense is lit and offerings made to the attendant spirits in gratitude for their aid. At this point the charge is given, although it may seem redundant given the repetitive entreaties during the invocation beseeching the Angels called to Watch and Protect the subject of the work. In this case, it was requested that even as the prior rite had banished the malefic spirits from his presence, the Angels and spirits now called take up guardianship of him and his, with assurances that they make no further attempts on his wellbeing.

The third day, the day of Saturn, we bring the working to its culmination. While on the first day we cleansed the castle of negative influences and performed the rites of uncrossing to embattle the curses plaguing the king, and on the second day we invoked the Headless God that he might deign to banish those spirits sympathetic to his enemies, and called upon those that shall henceforth post guard throughout his kingdom, we on the third day bound those who meant him harm and sought to reverse their work that his kingdom may remain secure in perpetuity.

Three black candles, each dressed in Devil's Shoestring Oil, were set atop three photos, each of which bore the image of one of his magical assailants, with their names written on the back in a mixture of ink and the oil.

The binding and reversal in this case was achieved using a rite from Col. XXIII of the Leiden Papyrus:

I invoke thee, who art in the void air, terrible, invisible, and almighty! God of Gods, dealing destruction and maker of desolation! He that hatest the household well established from which thou were cast, Egypt, to which you were entitled! "He that destroyeth all and is yet unconquered" is thy name! I invoke thee, Set-Typhon, by thy words of power which thou canst not refuse to hear! YOERBETH, YOPAKERBETH, YOBOLKHOSETH,

YOPATATHNAX, YOSORO, YONEBOUTOSOUALETH, AKITIOPHI, ERESHKIGAL, NEBOPOSOALETH, ABERAMENTHOOU, LERTHEXANAX, ETHRELUOTH, NEMAREBAM AEMINA!

Come to me and approach! Hear my words! Strike down N with frost and fire, and bind him that he shall wrong me no more! Return to him that which he sends to me and bind his arms that he may no more strike me!

The three votive candles were allowed to burn down until only a small portion of their wax remained; the photos of the three whom the work sought to bind were rolled into scrolls, which were bound with red thread soaked through in Domination Oil. These were further secured by dripping the remainder of the melting wax onto the knots. The three photos, thus bound, were placed in a black bag wherein I had placed Agrimony, Graveyard Dirt, and dried Habanero peppers.

Here I employed techniques varying in origin from the Ancient Greeks to those of the modern day Conjureman, yet despite the centuries and seas separating them, they blended together seamlessly. This is how New World magic continues to evolve, not simply to blight but also to benefit. The magic of the New World presents the modern practitioner with opportunities for progress and more importantly success, which our predecessors would surely have envied. Magicians of widely varying traditions in the New World are afforded the possibility of exploring the best aspects of each other's path. I am honored to participate in this project, and it is my hope that this faithful relation of my own working may inspire the reader to dig deeper and go further, always seeking ascent.

ENDNOTES

1 While I have recently developed a greater interest in the Conjure magick, due in large part to ConjureMan Ali and Catherine Yronewode, I acknowledge humbly that I am but a novice therein and limit my experiments to the very basic, such as the uncrossing work performed in the aforementioned case.

2 Traditionally, in Conjure magick, the planets Jupiter, Venus and the Sun are the most beneficial when working to uncross. I chose Jupiter in this case as I have in recent days worked extensively with a group known as Gentlemen For Jupiter in applying many variant methods in reaching and shaping the Jovial influences in our lives, and because the following progression of days suited my goal perfectly.

3 The Uncrossing Incense and other supplies I used here were formulated using the recipes of Catherine Yronwode & Lucky Mojo.

4 Flannel is the traditional fabric of which this bag is made, but in my experience a bag of silk works quite well.

5 While there are varying recipes for Abramelin Oil, the two predominant are those found in Mathers' and in Dehn's translations of *The Book of the Sacred Magic*; Of these two I have found the superior to be Dehn's and it is this that I use.

6 Note that I do not use Holy Water from a Catholic church as is suggested by some. I find nothing holy therein, and use either water from the river Jordan, the Nile, or water sanctified as in the *Key*.

LIBATIONS FOR THE LWA

Ivy Kerrigan and Drac Uber

It is impossible to know exactly how the Ancient Greeks worshipped or how they performed magic, but we can find tantalising glimpses in the sources left behind. Even these glimpses should be treated with caution, Ancient Greece as a civilisation lasted for approximately 1300 years and anything we find can only ever be a snapshot in time, rather than representative of the whole period. It is equally impossible to fully communicate the true depth of Haitian Vodou in writing. It is a term that covers a complex interrelated set of spiritual tradition and practices. It is the result of the infusion and distillation of the spiritual heritage of multiple peoples over several centuries. Yet we can benefit from examining the similarities and differences between Haitian Vodou and the spiritual, magical and religious practices of the Ancient Greeks based on both the available texts and our personal experiences.

We are not suggesting trying to recreate Ancient Greek practises, what we are suggesting is that Western magic should look to its past rooted in the regions around the Mediterranean basin and to its contemporaries, the modern traditions outside of our experience so that we can look to the future and build a strong solid traditions for us all. Everything must evolve. The static unchanging dies, or is superseded. We seem to have lost sight of this, clinging to grimiores and past celebrities when should be building on their work. We seem to be unable to see past them to our roots, or conversely in front of them to our future. But we are not suggesting that people mix and match from different cultures and spiritual practices. To take what has not been given to you is at best theft and at worst cultural imperialism. Perhaps by examining living traditions and where they mirror our own heritage, we can find new ways to build upon the solid base of our own spiritual and magical traditions.

COSMOLOGY

Haitian Vodou does not have a collective mythology comparable to Hesiod's Theogony, although there are plenty of stories about individual Lwa (spirits) or the relationships between them. The hierarchy of Vodou comes from the way that the various peoples of Haiti came together to form and give birth to it.

Vodousants (followers of Vodou) believe in an ultimate source of the divine, who is the Creator of everything. This being is called Gran Met (Great Master) or Bondye (Good God) and is identified with the Christian God. This may seem strange to modern western magicians and neo-pagans, but a single Creator and source of divinity who gives birth to all the other gods and the universe was common in the ancient world.[1] As Gran Met has to run the universe s/he is far too busy to get involved with the affairs of mankind, so s/he has lesser aspects of the him/herself, called Lwa, who rule over various areas of human life. Each of the Lwa have their own characteristics behaviours, colours, items, images,[2] favourite foods and drinks. The Lwa are divided into three main families, Rada, Petro and Gede. These then have various sub-families, such as Ibo or Congo. The Rada Lwa are the 'coolest' of the three families

and are primarily from Guinea (Africa), especially Dahomey. *They are considered beneficial, and in some cases so ancient as to be detached and slow to act.*[3] These are the Rasine Lwa (root spirits), the ancestral spirits that slaves from West Africa brought with them to Haiti and those of the Taino Indians that were already there.

The Petro Lwa are primarily New World and Bantu (Congolese) in origin. *They are considered fierce, protective, magical, and aggressive toward adversaries.*[4] Despite their fiery disposition (and the impression given by some Western writers) the Petro Lwa are not 'evil' spirits with the Rada being 'good' spirits. They are the nation born of the Haitian revolution, of the fires of change that gave birth to the western hemisphere's first black republic: *the Petro nation comprises that part of Vodou's spirit world that does not look back to Ginen or pre-Columbian Ayiti. Instead, the Petro as a group represent the history of the island from the moment of first contact, the "unity that makes strength" written on the Haitian flag.*[5]

The Gede Lwa are the Lwa of death. They are crude, raunchy and delight in telling dirty jokes. *They embrace the dual domains of human frailty and mortality, the creation and the conclusion of life.*[6] The Gede are drawn from the dead that have not been reclaimed or have been forgotten by their family. Being beyond life and the social restrictions of the living, they are taboo breakers and use humour to expose our pretty conceits.

Other than the Lwa, the main spirits served by Vodousants are the Ancestors. Although they are generally considered less powerful than the Lwa they are also considered more important. This is because they are family and therefore should be shown respect. Those who serve their Ancestors will be looked after by them, but those that don't will suffer misfortune. The Ancestors are generally offered the food and drink that they liked in their life, with the exception that when the food is prepared no salt is used.

So where do the lwa live? To the most part the answer is Ginen. Ginen is an idealised 'ancestral' Africa. Alternatively after death the souls of the dead are said to descend into the abysmal waters, but can later be reclaimed by their living family or by Baron and become Gede. However there are also places within our world where the spirits reside. For the most part these are sacred rocks, trees, waterfalls, springs and other natural features. Some of these places are places of pilgrimage (such as the waterfall at Saut d'Eau and Ogou's mud bath in Plaine Du Nord) at certain times of year.[7]

SINGING, ECSTATIC DANCE & TRANCE WORK

Despite Ancient Greece having been studied far more extensively, we actually know far more about the use of music and song in Haitian Vodou. During large Vodou dances called *fet* (meaning festival) a combination of music, dance and song is used to entice the Lwa and to induce trance in the participants. Each of the main families of Lwa are split into smaller sub-families. Each of these sub-families has a certain drum rhythm (or even rhythms), and there are different dances for each rhythm (or sometimes sets of rhythms), with each Lwa having songs specifically for them. While it is only really larger dances where you will find drumming (mostly because of the expense), dance and song are very much part of smaller parties and any 'work' with a Lwa will include song.

While we don't know for certain how music and song were used in Ancient Greece, we do know that they were very important particularly in ritual. Aristophanes says: *The blessed ones wend their way with song and dance through the holy circle of the goddess.*[8]

The two main bodies of religious/magical song to make it down to us are the *Homeric Hymns*[9] and the *Orphic Hymns*.[10] While the former (and earlier) of the two was primarily performed at post ritual banquets,[11] we know that the latter were used from their introduction (circa 300 BCE) both within 'cultic' settings (set to music, mostly lyres and flutes) and personal ritual. According to Lucian of Samosata (in his *De Dea Syria*, circa 2nd century CE)[12] all rituals were accompanied by song and music. *Plato defined song (melos) as the fusion of word, rhythm, and melody; so Greek music seems to have been monophonic*.[13] So while the only percussion instruments to ever be used in ritual were cymbals, there would have almost certainly a rhythmic component to the ritual music.

Ritual dances were almost certainly used as worship in Greece as far back as 5000 BCE and choral dance was an important part of ritual in sites such as Delphi, Knossos and Eleusis. Shannon[14] believes that part of this rich tradition can still be seen in modern dances descended from these ancient forms of worship.

The Trata of Megara (near Eleusis) is danced on the Tuesday after Easter. Initiates of the Eleusian mysteries re-enacted Persephone's descent into the underworld and eventual return in dance. Shannon says: *I believe something of this still survives in the women's dance Trata, still danced in and around Eleusis today*.[15]

However ecstatic dance doesn't seem to have been part of mainstream Greek religion. The exception of course is the cult of Dionysus, although the trance states induced during these celebrations were very different to those obtained within Haitian Vodou. Whereas in Vodou trance is induced so that a Lwa may enter and (for a time) replace the person, those participating in the Dionysian mysteries induced a voluntary possession and would enter into a wild frenzy (which was bestial in nature).

Laura Shannon tells of a living tradition in Thrace that she believes is descended from the ecstatic rites of Dionysus called The Ritual Meal of the Anastenaria. This pre-Christian rite includes dancing *barefoot through burning coals under the miraculous protection of Saint Constantine. The ecstatic dancing at the heart of the ritual is supported by ceremonial tasks, carried out with rigorous attention to detail, just as at ancient temples*.[16]

Dionysian possessions became so widespread and were seen as such a threat to society that in 186 BCE ancient Rome issued laws to suppress them.[17] Possession is a difficult concept for many in the modern Western world to grasp as it involves liberation from both your self and from society, and whilst many of us yearn for freedom we are also so used to control that we are unable to achieve this. Many Vodou houses find that Western applicants find possession much more difficult than the native Haitians. However in ancient Greece it was the suppressed that embraced possession; women, slaves and non-citizens were all active members of the Dionysian cult and for many of these this was their only opportunity to break out of the constricting roles assigned to them by society. Possession was induced with drugs, wines, sex, dance and music. As in Vodou rites, particular rhythms were used and can be found preserved in Greek prose such as Euripides' *Bacchantes*.[18]

Spirit possession features in one other capacity in ancient Greece and this was to enable oracular priests/priestesses to contact the gods and communicate their will. It is often said that the pronouncements of Apollo at Delphi were given through a priestess called the Pythia who was in trance and interpreted by the

priests[19] although Maurizio maintains that *not one ancient source suggests that anyone other than the Pythia issued oracular responses.*[20] Either way, it is agreed that the Pythia entered trance states to receive her information.

In contrast, trance possession in Vodou is a different animal. Whereas trance in Ancient Greece seems to have aimed to alter the perception of the consciousness, in Vodou the aim is to completely dislodge and subdue consciousness so that it can be replaced by that of the Lwa. *During the possession, the Lwa takes over the body of its servant and uses it to eat, drink, dance, offer advice, take part in certain ceremonies, or otherwise interact with other Vodouisants in a physical manner.*[21] To draw the Lwa (and the ancestors, for that matter) close and to attend to their needs underlies most of Vodou and in possession we see the ultimate expression of this.

OFFERINGS

Mankind has a long history of gift giving to forge bonds between two parties. The bonds can be obligation, gratitude, friendship or love. Gifts can show that we care, can be a simple exchange of services or both. Giving a birthday gift to your best friend show's caring, but you also expect a gift in return when your birthday rolls around. Offerings to the gods work on a similar principle, the gifts of offerings or sacrifice, prayer and service, help to forge a relationship between you and the chosen spirit. This is often something that is missing in modern observance and we believe is vital to any magical practise. Someone who has a relationship with you is more likely to help you and treat you kindly than someone you just drag in off the street.

Ancient Greek literature abounds with examples of offerings to the gods. One of our favourites is found in the *Homeric Hymn to Hestia:*[22]

Hestia, in the high dwellings of all, both deathless gods and men who walk on earth, you have gained an everlasting abode and highest honour: glorious is your portion and your right. For without you mortals hold no banquet, –where one does not duly pour sweet wine in offering to Hestia both first and last.

This shows the Greek attitude to offerings; they were seen as the right of the gods. There are many examples of the first of whatever is hunted, fished gathered or grown being offered to the gods as their right. The first of a new season's wine was always offered to Dionysus and the first of the corn harvest to Demeter. If an animal was sacrificed the choicest bits or the offal might be given to the gods before anyone else was allowed to partake. In the same way a portion of any war spoils might be offered to a god's sanctuary before the rest was divided up between the victors. In this way sacrifice in Ancient Greece shares something with sacrifice in Haitian Vodou. When animal sacrifices are actually made (normally in connection with a big dance), it usually takes place prior to the ceremony, the flesh of the animal is then prepared and cooked, with a portion of this being offered to the Lwa, along with other appropriate food, and the rest being fed to all those in attendance.

The type of offerings given in Ancient Greece would differ depending on the god or spirit and what they desired. Offerings may be taken to a sanctuary or left at a sacred spot for animals or the less fortunate to consume; they could be put into a river a well or another body of water and they were often burnt. Offerings to underworld gods were put into a pit or left in caves.

Very similar practices can be found in Haitian Vodou. In fact we would suggest that this can be found in any culture or spiritual practice where the spirit realm is present as part of everyday life. In Haiti, as in Ancient Greece, man lives alongside the spirits and shares the world with them.

It is thought that in early ritual, food offerings were sacred to the gods and not consumed by man but from the late classical period onwards offerings left at a temple would be gifted to the priest and the gifts of grain received by the sanctuary at Eleusis were used as currency.

Votive offerings were common, with Ancient Greeks pledging gifts in return for a certain outcome in an upcoming event. These might be gifts of sacrifice, money, service etc. Likewise in Vodou a great variety of offerings are given, from a simple candle and water to food and drink favoured by the particular Lwa and special items or images associated with them.

Libations of liquids such as wine, oil, water, milk and honey were often given and a variety of liquids are used for the same purpose in Vodou. One reason for the importance of libation is given by Walter Burkert who says: *What distinguishes the outpouring from other gifts of food is its irretrievability; what is spilled cannot be bought back. The libation is therefore the purest and highest form of renunciation.*[23]

PLACE OF THE DEAD

The Greek fictions about death are not peculiar to Greece; they contain universal elements, by necessity. The Greek view of death is no more imaginative or potent than other peoples' views; it is typically bizarre and inconsistent, and conventional even where it seems most individual.[24]

The ancient Greeks had a complex set of mythologies surrounding death. If a person died from natural causes then the daimon of death Thanatos would come for them. As the twin of Hypnos, the daimon of sleep, he was said to be a kind god with a gentle touch, however those unlucky enough to die by another's hand either in battle or murder or by disease would be claimed by the Keres, the three daimon sisters of violent and cruel death. From here Hermes Khthonios would collect the soul and lead it to the realm of Hades as described in the Orphic hymn 57. *Thine is the wand which causes sleep to fly, or lulls to slumberous rest the weary eye; for Persephone, through Tartaros dark and wide, gave thee for ever flowing souls to guide.*[25]

Located either at the edge of or within the earth Hades was not an easy place to get to as it is guarded by Kerberos and protected by the Akherousian mere. If the proper funeral rites were observed then the soul could board Kharon's boat and be transported to their final resting place in Hades. In early times this would have been the end of the story but later on Hades evolved to include judges, a paradise realm, a hell dimension and even reincarnation. Those unfortunate souls who had not received due burial would be left to wander on the earthly side of the Akheron forever. This shows the necessity of a proper burial, in fact in the *Iliad*[26] Homer refers to the omission of burial rites as an insult to human dignity.

The Greeks believed that at the moment of death the psyche, or spirit of the dead, left the body as a little breath or puff of wind.

The Greek funeral has three stages, the laying out of the body or the prothesis, transport to the final resting place or the ekphora and the interment itself. As in most cultures the burial rites were carried out by fe-

male relatives of the dead person. The body would be washed and anointed with oil, then dressed and placed on a high bed within the house. Relatives would visit the body and pay their respects, lamentation would be common. The funeral party would then process from the home to the cemetery often just before dawn. Some sort of tomb or marker was often erected to mark the grave so that the living would not forget them. Immortality for the dead lay in their continued remembrance by the living. From depictions on white-ground *lekythoi*,[27] we know that the women of Classical Athens made regular visits to the grave with offerings such as small cakes and libations.

Similarly in Haiti great importance is placed on proper funerary rites and overt displays of mourning. For the funerals itself and the grave site a family will provide the best that they are able to afford (which may even include professional mourners). There are two other rituals that will usually be performed, the Dessounin, performed soon after death to help separate the spirit from the body, and the Kase-Kanari, performed a full year later to reclaim the soul from the abysmal waters. Those that are not reclaimed, for whatever reason, may then be claimed by Baron and Manman Brijit to join the ranks of the Gede.

The dead were important in ancient Greece; as quoted by Plato in *Hippas Major*[28] the best thing of all was *to be rich, healthy, honoured by the Greeks, reach old age, and, after burying one's parents well, to be laid out well by one's own children and buried magnificently*. Funeral displays got so out of hand that Plutarch reports Solon[29] implementing funerary legislation at the beginning of the 6th centaury BCE. These were designed to cap the maximum amount of expenditure and put an end to the extravagant, ostentatious displays.

Everyday Greeks could contact their dead for help using dream incubation at one of the sanctuaries of the dead. In *Moralia* Plutarch describes one such instance where a man called Elysius contacts his dead father to find out if he was murdered: *So he arrived at some oracle of the dead. He made the customary preliminary sacrifices, went to sleep, and saw the following vision*.[30]

For more overt magic there were types of spirit that were very active, making them dangerous but useful if they could be controlled. These restless dead were already well established by Homer's time and fell into four groups, those dead before their time, those dead by violence, those dead before marriage and those deprived of burial. In the *Odyssey* Homer also gives us the format for a necromantic ritual which seems to stay pretty static throughout the period.[31] Almost all the rituals take place at night around a fire with a pit nearby. Libations are given, most usually of honey, milk, wine or olive oil and a black animal (often a sheep) is sacrificed. The blood of the animal is put into the pit to feed the spirits and give them strength and form, and the whole carcass is burnt as an offering. Prayers are then said to the spirits and the gods who hold them in the underworld; if their temporary release is granted then a multitude of spirits will appear and need to be controlled with swords of bronze or iron.

Interestingly, in Haitian Vodou the soul is not viewed as a singular entity, but rather a composite of a number of elements.[32] The two parts that are relevant here are the ti bon ange (little good angel) and the nanm. The ti bon ange is the closest to what we in the West would understand as a soul and it is this part that that descends into the abysmal waters following death. The nanm on the other hand is the spiritual force that animates the body and remains in the body after death.

It is this which is being called, when you work with a skull. While these spirits retain some of the personality of the person it is more like a shadow or photograph of the person that once inhabited the remains.

In early Greek history people who spoke to the dead in this or similar ways were called shamans and, according to Ogden, were *characterized by the ability to manipulate their own souls, be it by detaching them temporarily from their bodies, and sending them on voyages of discovery, suspending them from life, reincarnating them or 'bilocating.'*[33] A number of further themes recur: extended retreats into underground chambers (a symbolic death and descent to the underworld, from which they return with enlightenment); divination; dismissal of pollution and pestilence. From later sources he describes practitioners called sorcerers, mages, beggar-priests and orphic initiators who specialise in *manipulations of souls, purifications, the use of incantations and the manufacture of binding spells*. These lists don't seem so different to us and we have to wonder if the leaning towards hostile magics are a reflection of society's attitude rather than changes in magical practise.

Necromancy and ancestral reverence are probably among the most ancient spiritual practices that mankind has engaged in, yet are almost completely missing from the Western magical revival. Even Catholicism manages to retain them, and yet in modern occultism it is often ignored, treated as somehow sinister or sidelined as something outdated and primitive. As far as we are concerned, the dead, whether they be our personal ancestors or one of the blessed dead, who have been raised up through their deeds, are the bedrock upon which magic is built. You ignore them at your peril.

DREAMWORK

Dreams are sorely neglected in modern practice, but they play a huge part in our history and should be utilized. In Ancient Greece dreams were extremely important, bringing messages from the gods and the ancestors. In Ancient Greece it was the Oneiroi who bought such dreams. True dreams were bought to this world through the gate of horn and false dreams through a gate of ivory.

In ancient times most dreams were catalogued as 'epiphany dreams' but in modern society most dreams are 'episode dreams'. Through work with your dreams it is possible to receive epiphany dreams. The new/novice dreamer goes through three stages.[34]

The first type of dream, the symbolic dream, cannot be understood without interpretation. In ancient Greece there was a roaring trade in dream dictionaries for dreams such as this, the most famous being the Oneirocritica by Artemidorus. Our personal feeling is that in modern society interpretation can only be done by the dreamer. E.R. Dodds puts it very well when he says *it rests on an unproved assumption about the universality of dream-symbols*.[35] Symbols are personal and cultural and in my experience gods very rarely give you something fully formed. They expect you to work for it, to test them almost. If you don't want it bad enough to unlock the meaning then you aren't worthy of it.

The second type of dream, the episode dream, shows a sequence of events with a main actor (usually the dreamer). These dreams are not always coherent or intelligible and are thought to be internal.

The third type of dream, the epiphany or oracle dream, is characterized by the appearance of an authority figure, a god, spirit, a parent etc. who conveys

instructions or information. There is usually very little background and no 'storyline.' These dreams are thought to be entirely external. We once had a leak in our flat and Ivy dreamt that the Vodou Lwa La Sirene came to her and described a wanga that we should make to fix it. We ritually constructed the wanga, as described by the spirit in Ivy's dream, and the leak went away and has not returned. On another occasion Drac dreamt about collecting clay for a spirit house that he was planning to construct in the waking world. In this he was collecting it from a completely different area than he had previously planned to, and it was made very clear that an offering of plum brandy should be given in exchange for the clay. These are examples of epiphany dreams.

The epiphany dream was common in the ancient world until medieval times but as society became more and more secular they started to be replaced by episode dreams. Outside the West, epiphany dreams could still be seen into the 20th century. There are reports from Mexico, rural Greece and Zululand in the 1930s and from Haiti in the 1970s. It is thought the reasons for this are purely cultural. In the ancient world our gods spoke to us, they were immediate, ever present and took interest in the lives of men. As we let our gods grow distant and let our relationships with them lapse so they stopped being able to offer their aid in such a simple way. In more 'primitive' cultures it took longer for people to forget the old ways so the dreams lingered.

Dreams can be received in a passive way or they can be incubated to receive an answer to a specific question or healing. In ancient Greece incubation was often used for healing in sanctuaries dedicated to Asklepios. Greeks with an ailment would visit sanctuaries, perform rituals, sleep and hope to have a dream that would cure them. Patients would fast, abstain from sex, give sacrifices, pray, dance, walk a labyrinth and/or go to sleep on the skin of an animal they had sacrificed all in an effort to bring on the dream as it could take days, weeks or months for the right dream. In the earliest accounts Asklepios would heal the patient through the dream but in later accounts the doctor-priests at the temple would interpret the patient's dream and prescribe a treatment based on this. That dream incubations often took place in a temple is not an accident; being in a temple is the closest that you can be to a god while still in corporeal form.

There are fragments of an older history of dreaming practiced at sanctuaries of death for ancestor contact and other oracles such as Delphi.

The Greek Magical Papyri includes a wonderful spell for dream incubation.[36] It states that the dreamer should take a linen strip, write the question or problem on the linen with Myrrh ink and wrap it around an olive branch. When going to bed the dreamer places this branch beside their head. They should go to sleep pure, on a rush mat on the floor and say the spell seven times to a lamp. Ivy has used versions of this spell many times with good results.

With the magical revival, epiphany dreams are returning to us all. Techniques such as incubation can only help this resurgence and we can only view this closer relationship with our gods and spirits as a good thing. The Western magical revival is just that, a revival, and still has a lot of growing up to do. While living traditions such as Haitian Vodou can give us a new perspective on how we can move forward, this must also be an evolution based on the solid foundation of our own magical traditions.

ENDNOTES & REFERENCES:

1 The various versions of the Kemetic (Egyptian) creation myth and the philosophy of Plato being excellent examples.

2 Most usually an image of a Catholic saint that features items link to the Lwa.

3 'The VODOU Page' © 1996 Mambo Racine Sans Bout

4 See note 8.

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8 Aristophanes, 4th century BCE.

9 *Hesiod, Homeric Hymns, Epic Cycle, Homerica* trans Hugh G Evelyn-White.

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12 Lucian, *The Syrian Goddess*, trans. by Herbert A. Strong and John Garstang, (1913)

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33 Daniel Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds*.

34 William V Harris, *Dreams and Experience in Classical Antiquity*.

35 ER Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*.

36 PGM VII.664–85. Hans Dieter Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in translation including the demotic texts,* 2nd edition.

MAGIC AT THE CROSSROADS

THE CROSSROADS is an archetypal location for encountering deities and other inhabitants of the underworld in works of magic. Our vernacular language is, of course, derived from arcane cultural roots regardless of its seeming familiarity. Thus the crossroads proverbially represents situations where possibilities are unusually maximised. What we might call secular time is digital, its atoms are undifferentiated units. For the first time in human history, reference to astronomical factors in measuring time has recently been asserted to be unnecessary. The undercurrents at work at this or that juncture of the realm of Chronos are not registered by mundane chronology.

This need hardly be doubted, even such tangible things as non-renewable resources are regularly omitted from supposedly rational calculation. So too – unremarked by conventional pundits – latent in particular moments, hours, days, even historical epochs, are powerful potentials not present in others. Even without invoking astrology, an oft abused & undervalued magical resource, this proposition while possibly unfamiliar is lacking in pretence, though not implication.

During the Hellenistic era there emerged for the first time a powerful and enduring synthesis of several major religions and magical traditions. This unparalleled occurrence was not possible before, and has not been repeated since. This synthesis is often attributed to philosophical movements and major seats of learning of the period. A moment's reflection brings to mind the Neoplatonists, particularly the school of the theurgist Iamblichus; and the great cities of Alexandria and Antioch. Remarkable and important as these were, the roots of the Western occult tradition were also the result of the first ever global culture. In other words, it was the period itself that possessed this potential, and the possibility of its realisation.

To our modern mindset it is obvious enough that such an event occurs on the popular as well as the purely intellectual level. That it is evident to us is an important indicator. It is due to the crossroads potential for a universal synthesis being unique to that time, until now. Now, once more, the possibility has indeed become inevitable; despite the indifference of secular learning, and the distracted incomprehension of many in the West. A global synthesis of religious and magical traditions is again imminent, is indeed already occurring in our times.

The dominant players in the emergent global synthesis are not immediately obvious to many English speaking occultists. More clarity perhaps has emerged in the last decade and a half. The role of Aleister Crowley, the Golden Dawn, this or that version of the Qabalah and certain grimoires are seen as important, and the nature of things on the wider stage remains unsuspected. Let us tangentially explore these over emphases.

Crowley undoubtedly had a piercing presentiment of the need for a renaissance of magic; restoring it to a position of importance in contemporary culture and bringing it up to date. His emphasis on sex and drugs, while potent in its appeal to the youth of the sixties onwards, did much to submerge features of the older

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traditions worthy of attention. Similarly he bought into many mistaken assumptions of the early revival, and emphasised some unhelpful or at least marginally important elements, such as irregular Freemasonry. In the latter he mirrored the Golden Dawn and other nineteenth century elements of the occultism of the day.

The track record of the Golden Dawn is a little more varied. Many contemporary neo-traditionalists are too eager to point to its failings, while neglecting some of its more important insights and successes. While the Masonic emphasis is – in my opinion – a negative inheritance, there are many positives. There is for example the clear appreciation by the Order and its founders that Western magic is a continuum. The incorporation in their initiation rites of elements inspired by the Eleusian and Samothracian Mysteries represents far more than a mere display of erudition. So too the incorporation of a good deal of Egyptian symbolism, often dismissed as due to the Egyptology craze of the time, reflects appreciation of the roots of Western magic in the distant past.

One of the most important rituals of the Golden Dawn and Thelemic heritage is the so-called Bornless Rite. This ritual was of course derived from the magical papyri. Note well that far less of this seminal material was available in their time than in ours. It cannot be doubted that had more been available they would have made excellent use of it. The importance of this ritual in contemporary magic is hard to overstate. Its role in the reception of the chief Thelemic Holy Book gives it major significance by itself, but its importance extends much further. The rite has featured in countless modern *Abramelin* retirements. It has been performed in a variety of roles, countless times, in innumerable locations by a host of modern magicians. This influence extends to post-Thelemic magical orders and includes, among others, the Temple of Set. Its antiquity and continued power serves to remind us that Western magic has always looked to Egypt, and that a major part of the synthesis underlying the Western Tradition took place there.

I am not the first author to point out that the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn suffered from little access to practical Hermetics. In other words, their great obstacle was that their Hermeticism preceded the publication of the papyri. A moment's reflection on the importance of the Headless Ritual from the Golden Dawn & Crowley to the present should encourage us to rectify the omission. This would also tap the root of the grimoires, which many exponents insist can only be approached successfully in the mindset of a medieval Christian. While this approach is certainly effective, the papyri provide a powerful alternative. They originate in the first global synthesis, and represent the precise areas in which Western magic has a contribution to play in the next.

As regards the various forms of Qabalah, whether Jewish, Christian or Hermetic cum generic, this is not the place for a detailed critique. Suffice it to say that I consider its role in shaping the grimoires to be superficial rather than central. We need to seriously question assumptions derived from the role of Qabalah in Golden Dawn and Thelemic usage. Astrology is the real basis both of ancient and grimoire magical models. Generic Qabalah derives much of its apparent importance from inclusion of simplified astrological models.

THREE MAGICIANS

On the question of individual grimoires I have, I hope, made my feelings plain elsewhere. Briefly the importance of the *Goetia of Solomon* has been misunderstood. It originates in English manuscripts, and was popularised in modern times by two English magicians: Mathers and Crowley. This should have alerted both revivalist and neo-traditionalist magicians to widen their brief. The relation of the grimoire to other, earlier texts in other languages, and the larger family of grimoires and their status in other cultures have made little impression on Western occultists until recently.

Other grimoires, spirits and even legendary magicians form part of a greater whole. As clarified elsewhere, the *Grimorium Verum* and *Grand Grimoire* more effectively assist an internationalist approach to the grimoires and to the larger tribe of spirits they concern. The spirits of the *Goetia of Solomon* reach us via Weyer, they are known both in German and in French texts, which often include other spirits. This background makes the number 72 irrelevant – one such text indeed is known as the *Hundred Kings* – and reveals an omitted hierarchy of Chiefs, Kings, Deputies and Subordinates where our attention really needs to be directed.

It has truthfully been said that the grimoires do not disguise themselves as Christian to avoid persecution. They have that form because the mindset of their authors was Christian. Reconstructionist approaches, which include not only the rare and obscure ingredients but also the Christian elements, take this as read. Nevertheless Renaissance Christian Hermeticists such as Ficino went to extreme lengths to avoid typical elements of grimoire practice: incantation, sigils and characters, talismans and so on. They did so in order to conform to Church doctrine, so as to have a 'permitted' magic. Other Neoplatonists, such as Mirandola, probably practiced no form of magic whatsoever; what they proposed was religious contemplation alone. So despite their religious background, in truth the grimoires represent forbidden knowledge and practices, in which any dividing line between angels and demons is of no account. Communication with them, through speech or written symbols, encourages the question: who are these inscriptions and writings addressing? Orthodox belief knows no acceptable answer.

Nevertheless the grimoires represent the successful, if partial, transition of ancient magic on the model of the papyri into a transformed Western culture. However, they do so without attaining what has been called *the dignity of the renaissance magus*; to which of course Ficino and his peers aspired. Solomon's regal wisdom is supposedly embodied by austere and learned scholar magicians such as John Dee; in reality neither represents the true grimoire magician.

The antinomian transition of the magician into modern Western culture does not conform to this lofty ideal in the slightest. The exponent of forbidden arts in the West is more truthfully represented by the disreputable Faust, who cast aside respectable learning for the lore of unreason and disorder.

All the pseudonymous authors of the grimoires are part of an underlying mythology; they are important figures, although rarely honoured with actual 'cult' in Western magic.

Solomon represents the wisdom of antiquity, a role once belonging to Persian magicians such as Zoroaster and Ostanes, and at other times by Egyptians and Chaldeans. Figures such as Apollonius of Tyana and

Pythagoras assumed the aura in their historical lives. An ancient wise man must be steeped in Eastern wisdom traditions. In the transition to the early modern West this aura was assumed by Alchemy and Neoplatonist or Hermetic philosophy, all of which represent an inheritance from antiquity. Magic stems from similar origins, but with a different reputation. Thus among the magical papyri we find references to Solomon and Moses as magicians, as in the later grimoires. So too the *Testament of Solomon* in its older parts is contemporary with this 'ancient wisdom.' The Christian redactor of the later text was anxious to destroy Solomon's reputation, a premonition of the status of the grimoires in the following era.

Thus Faust represents the real transition into modern Europe of the magical elements of this ancient heritage. Now however Faust, confronted with the evolution of the Second Great Synthesis, is as unable to adapt to the future as was Solomon before him.

The only legendary magician of note able to personify and operate in this context is Saint Cyprian. In Western magical lore Saint Cyprian personifies more than any other the meeting of ancient lore with the magical traditions of the grimoires and the New World. He was contemporary with the papyri, *Chaldean Oracles* and *Testament of Solomon*; these with the writings of the philosophers would have been on his bookshelf. Rites attributed to him appear in the Coptic papyri, preceding his authorship of various grimoires and spells. From a combination of migrating folk tradition and the grimoires came his status in Hoodoo and other modern traditions. This meeting of classical magic, the grimoires and New World traditions is the triple way presided over by Hecate in classical lore and Pomba Gira in Kimbanda.

MAGIC AT THE CROSSROADS

The present Western tradition of magic was fused from disparate elements in a cultural melting pot approximately 2000 years ago. In emphasising the Greco-Roman origins of this tradition, I am not diminishing later Jewish and Islamic contributions.

Indeed, before Mirandola and Agrippa put Cabala at the core of Christian Hermeticism, and before Renaissance Astrology was learned from the Arabs as represented by the *Picatrix,* and the era of learning in Moorish Spain, much earlier Middle Eastern influences existed within the magic of the Roman Empire, reaching far back into the Greek past to Minoan times. But let us stay with the Romans awhile.

To steal a sporting cliché, Rome was an Empire of two halves. A Western Empire conquered by the Romans, and an Eastern Empire ready made by the Greeks.

It was this first half – including Asia Minor, represented today by Turkey, and the astrological centre of Babylon, as well as Egypt and beyond – that originated much of the civilisation of Rome, including the origins of Western magic.

This phase of our tradition – prior to Cabala and Arab Astrology – already possessed many features we can recognise in the grimoires:

- There was already an Astrology systemised from Babylonian star lore and Egyptian Decan gods &c. in Hellenistic times. To this Western magical astrology owes a great deal.
- There were already angels as well as other kinds of entity. There were demons, magical alphabets and curious sigils and talismans.

• There were Names of Power and models of the universe involving spheres, passwords and hierarchies.

In short, Western magic has a much longer history, a long and indeed unbroken tradition, rooted in ancient Western and Middle Eastern culture. Thus key elements of grimoire practice represent a clear line of descent for modern magic. They represent a near continuous tradition involving the most ancient rites and mysteries of Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Egypt, as well as the ancient cultures of Thrace and Minoan Crete (where the black hilted knife comes from).

It is of course perfectly just to observe that Western is not a particularly accurate or meaningful term. As I have no axe to grind for ethnic or geographic primacy, and we have much ground to cover, we'll simply acknowledge Greek awareness of Indian philosophy, and other trans-Mediterranean contacts. Greek for our purposes is more a linguistic and intellectual medium of ancient culture, in which ethnicity has no primary role.

The Late Pagan World then – politically Roman but intellectually Greek, and with many important Middle Eastern elements – possessed a magic involving hierarchies of gods. Gods translates the term *elohim*. Incidentally, the term *Late Pagan* does not exclude the idea of monotheism. These gods, with retinues of angels and spirits, were generally classified astrologically. The same pattern, with Hebrew terms camouflaging the Neoplatonist substrata, is the basis of most Solomonic magic; via Agrippa through Barrett it also underpins much of the Golden Dawn Qabalah – with a Q – as found in Crowley's 777, (these are incidentally the more operable elements of the 19th century tradition).

The spirits concerned were and are not exclusively planetary. Important strata were attributed to the sublunar region. These were collectively called Aerial spirits, and consist in great part of spirits of the dead. This identification has been lost sight of, with various negative effects in modern magic.

The Aerial spirits are organised hierarchically, according to their level of evolution. This capacity to evolve is an important characteristic. It represents a great part of the rationale of their cooperation with magicians. Indeed, a fair proportion of these spirits were once mortal magicians and initiates of mystery cults. That they evolve also represents a major point of contact with the concepts of New World Afro-Iberian traditions, such as Espiritismo and Kimbanda.

This same hierarchy, inherited from Neoplatonist Theurgy, is recognisable in later Cabalistic models. The relevant levels equate more or less exactly with the so called Angelic choirs of the lower four Sefirot. The most relevant version of these choirs appears in Agrippa's *Scale of the Number Ten*. In their Greek form they include Demi-gods, equating with the Beni-Elohim, Heroes equating with the Cherubim (in this table likely a cover for Cabiroi) and Pure Souls, equating with the Ishim.

Their ranks include figures of great antiquity and mythic status, not ordinary ghosts by any means. We can usefully compare them with the much invoked Saints – official and unofficial – of popular Catholicism and Hoodoo &c. also, importantly, with Ancestors. Interestingly the Aerial Spirits also equate with many demons of the grimoires. Despite some interpretations to the contrary the majority of these are rarely of the stereotypical infernal variety.

We begin to see then how a re-examination of the

late pagan synthesis is useful when comparing African Traditional Religions of the New World with Western magic. It is in fact far more useful than a comparison with our modern image of Judæo-Christian magic and modern generic Qabalah. It need hardly be underlined either that it is late Classical paganism that provides this opportunity, not most forms of modern neo-paganism.

This useful but by no means obvious truth is only a little surprising, and it applies to many aspects of Western occultism. The 'late Pagan' and 'New World religion' comparison has value for many aspects of Western occultism, both pagan and Christian.

Many African Traditional Religions involve Orisha or Lwa &c, and ancestor spirits, set within a Christian framework. Not official Church doctrine, but of popular tradition or folk Catholicism. It bears emphasising that this concerns popular tradition rather than organised religion. This is important, not least because folk religion is the level at which syncretism and synthesis really occurs. The Hellenistic philosophers only rationalised and interpreted the cultural ferment surrounding them; the impetus arose in the common culture. The nominal connections to this or that form of orthodox belief have little relation to the real content and context.

This same cultural blending is occurring in our times, with or without the approval or comprehension of individuals and groups. As the testing ground of belief is – as stated – on the popular level, there are bound to be superficial and short lived elements to it. On the other hand new fusions, adaptations and interpretations will arise and persist, one way or another.

I am not advocating New Age style cultural appropriation, rather placing it in the real context of cultural fusion in a globalised society. A process in which meaningful participation and maximising of the potential good requires the comparison recommended here.

Individually, on the most basic level, the spiritualist or spiritist elements require proper appreciation. So too it must be thoroughly understood that while part of the modern world, traditions such as Hoodoo and Espritismo have an African heart. Since African and European Christianities are far from identical, a too narrow appreciation of Christian and Spiritualist/Spiritist elements loses far too much. The real benefits our traditions could derive are missed altogether through mere superficial borrowings.

I trust then that – given some mental flexibility – the alternative of comparing the late pagan strata of Western magic with the ATRs can be distinguished and preferred. This route can enliven deep strands and aspects of the Western tradition, hitherto neglected by the revival. These losses, which are very considerable, can then be recouped.

I believe this approach can enhance Christian and Pagan magic as well as other strands of the Western Tradition. It maximises both what the West can receive and what it can contribute within the cultural fusions of our era. The comparison I advocate accomplishes this on several levels, philosophical and practical.

The eschatological level is where our tradition stands to benefit most of all. Re-engaging with this specific area of our tradition also connects magic with the more meaningful needs of ordinary people. In this way our tradition can become socially as well as culturally relevant, and return from the margins of society to its heart.

BIOGRAPHIES

ConjureMan Ali is a professional root-doctor and reader with decades of experience in the study and practice of magick. He is a well-known djinn conjurer and exorcist in the Middle East and North Africa and his current research involves studying the connection between Greco-Roman goetia and Near Eastern practices of djinn conjuring. He is a Tata Quimbanda and is deeply involved in the magic and spirituality of the Congo which compliments his work in Hoodoo. His background in the world of academia informs his approach and he is part of the breed of mage-scholars who tempers study and research with practicality and results.

Chad 'Balthazar' Barber is a folk magician, card reader and espiritista. Born and raised in Southern Africa he hails from a family line addled with mediums, dreamers and madmen. Chad is a Lucky Mojo certified practitioner and a member of AIRR: Association of Independent Readers and Rootworkers. In addition to working as a root-doctor he serves his local community as a spiritist medium at mesa blanca gatherings. As a Santeria initiate and practitioner of espiritismo – a form of afro-caribbean spiritism – he is especially interested in the important role that the Creole traditions are playing in an emerging new synthesis of western spirituality and magic.

Christopher Bradford (Frater AIT) is a Palero, Rootworker, Alchemist, and writer. Having been blessed with great teachers in the Western Mystery Tradition and the African Diasporic current, Christoper spends a considerable amount of time transferring the gnosis he has received to other spiritually concerned persons through the written word and classical initiation.

Michael Cecchetelli is a lifelong student and practitioner of the magickal arts who has devoted himself to the grimoire tradition and the practice of evocation. He is the author of Scarlet Imprint's *Crossed Keys* and the forthcoming *Book of Abrasax*. He has a wide range of life experiences, good, bad, and ugly, which provided him a unique opportunity for magickal growth and development, and have given him an equally unique perspective on the magick of the ancients.

Angela Edwards is an underground artist and practitioner based in London. Her work has been exhibited and is in private collections around the world. She researched various Western magickal systems before arriving at Quimbanda and Voudon. These are explored in her work through the themes of sexuality, creation and destruction in death, and the quest for the expression of fragility wherein lays the soul. Her paintings are a postmodernist response to the Voudon and Quimbanda traditions, exploring trance using the primitive erotic true soul. A devotee of Pomba Gira, Edwards often uses female psychosexuality, sex magickal practice, transgression, and her experiences as an ex-sexworker within her work. Her *Tantric Brute Grimoire* is due in 2012 with a foreword by Nicholaj De Mattos Frisvold. She is currently creating her second illustrated grimoire based on workings with Pomba Gira.

Kyle Fite is an Eclectician of the Sacred, writing, painting and drawing inspiration from the Crossroads where Past and Future touch Time with the Outflowing and Ingoing Breath of God. His writing represents an aesthetic extension of the Boullan Academy of Spiritual Service into the Atmosphere of Aspiration whereby we wing our Way into the Sunfire of Soul-Life. Kyle serves OTOA-LCN as its Sovereign Grand Master and is a passionate proponent of Typhonian Thelema. In

the Realm of Vudu, he is devoted to Legbha-Christ and Lord Eshu, without whom the Ashe would not stir.

Kyle expresses a deep debt of gratitude to Adonia-Kym for years of cryptic co-work and revelation. She is the Adele to his Joseph. Also, thanksgiving and honor to Michael Bertiaux, Aquarius and Capricornus, that Triune Sagacity which has never ceased to bestow kindness, wisdom and energy along the Great Way and Grand Chemin, ever flowing with Angels to-and from-the Esoteric Sun. *Mo Juba Awo Eshu-Elegba! Iwo ni Iko Olodumare ati Orisa ati Egun!*

Nicholaj de Mattos Frisvold, aka Agbomola Ifasotito Agbefayelele is a member of the society of Ifa elders, Ogboni Funfun, in Abeokuta, Nigeria. He is a traditional astrologer, an anthropologist and psychologist. His research has focussed on African faiths and metaphysics and the intellectual history of psychology. He lives in Brazil where he founded the Institute for the Perfect Nature. He has published *Palo Mayombe* and *Pomba Gira* with Scarlet Imprint.

Stephen Grasso is a writer and artist based in London. He has practiced Voodoo for more than a decade. His work has appeared in the anthologies *Generation Hex, Devoted, XVI, Dreamflesh, Abraxas, Strange Attractor 4* and many others. He is working on his first full-length book, *Dub Seance*, of which his contribution to the present collection is an extract. When he is not casually moving between worlds at public landmarks, he enjoys mashing down Babylon System and DJing from his extensive collection of Voodoo-related vinyl records.

Peter Grey is a devotee of Babalon, the co-founder of Scarlet Imprint and author of *The Red Goddess*.

Ivy Kerrigan has been practicing witchcraft and other magical traditions for over ten years. Her main avenues of practice are shamanism, dreaming and working with the Greek chthonic spirits. She also practices Haitian Vodou, is an initiate of the Hearth of the Sangreal (of the Clan Coranieid) and has a close relationship with several of the spirits of the *Grimorium Verum*. She lives in a seaside town in Southern England, with her husband Drac.

Aaron Leitch has been a scholar and spiritual seeker for over two decades. He is a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the academic Societas Magica. His writings (both in print and online) cover such varied fields as ancient Middle Eastern religion and mythology, Solomonic mysticism, Shamanism, Neoplatonism, Hermeticism and Alchemy, Traditional Wicca and Neopaganism, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Thelema, Angelology, Qabalah, Enochiana, African Diaspora Religions, Hexcraft and Hoodoo folk traditions, Psychology and Consciousness Expansion, Cyberspace and Virtual Reality and modern social commentary. He is the author of *Secrets of the Magickal Grimoires* and *The Angelical Language*. His work also appears in *Diabolical*.

Eric K. Lerner is a priest of Obatala Ajaguna. He is an artist and writer whose work was featured in Scarlet Imprint's XVI.

Humberto Maggi has being trying for the last 26 years to realise the difficult marriage between the scientific method and magical praxis. He champions a return to the methodologies of the shamans, whose practices and results he believes to remain the same in every known branch of mysticism and magic – despite the different theological and philosophical interpretations given to them over time. He defends the idea that these practices and results should be completely separated from the traditional interpretations and submitted to scientific analysis, with special recourse to the current developments in Neuroscience. He is a Knight of the East and West in the Ordo Templi Orientis.

Doug Nox creates visual art as a primary outlet for his magickal praxis. He is currently enmeshed in a shamanic graffiti project called the Harlequinade, which seeks to affect the geomantic energies of cities with a layered meta-narrative and the

creation of spirit fetishes placed strategically throughout the city.

Jake Stratton-Kent is England's most notorious necromancer, having been a goetic magician since 1972. His practical work integrates the magical papyri, Italo-French grimoires, in particular the *Grimorium Verum*, and African Traditional Religions with a focus on Quimbanda and Magia Negra. The volumes of his *Encyclopaedia Goetica* are published by Scarlet Imprint.

Hagen von Tulien is a contemporary artist and occultist with more than thirty years of intense magical theory and practice. He specialises in creating art as an expression and manifestation of magical states of awareness and its use as an esoteric tool.

Throughout the 1990s Hagen was a key figure in the Magical Pact of the Illuminates of Thanateros, serving as its section head for Germany.

He is currently a Master-Initiate of the Fraternitas Saturni and an empowered adept of the Société Voudon Gnostique. As a Gnostic Priest of the Ecclesia Gnostica Aeterna, he is dedicated to manifesting the supreme and divine Gnosis Aeterna within himself, whilst assisting others on their own path to kosmic freedom and liberation.

Drac Uber is a servant of the Old Gods and a child of the Lady of the Stars and Sea. He has been studying various spiritual paths for over 15 years, including Witchcraft and Haitian Vodou for well over ten years. In 2001 he was Kanzoed as a Houngan Sur Pwent of Haitian Vodou by the Roots Without End society in Jacmel, Southern Haiti. He has since been adopted into La Sosyete Fos Fe Yo We based in Chicago, USA. He is initiated in Witchcraft by the Hearth of Brighid (of the Clan Coranieid) and now runs a hive of this coven, the Hearth of the Sangreal.

Ryan Valentine currently resides in Toronto, Canada with his partner Vanessa. Most usually they write and paint and sing and fuck for the pleasure of it. Occasionally, they do so as Hoodoo in service to the courtesans of Porn Valley.

Richard Ward is an eclectic occultist, ritual magician, and psychic quester. He is a devotee of the Red Goddess and has been a practitioner of Vodou in the Haitian tradition since 1996. His work has previously been featured in *Lovecraft Studies*, *Pagan Dawn*, *Starfire*, and *Talking Stick* journal in addition to Scarlet Imprint's *Devoted*.